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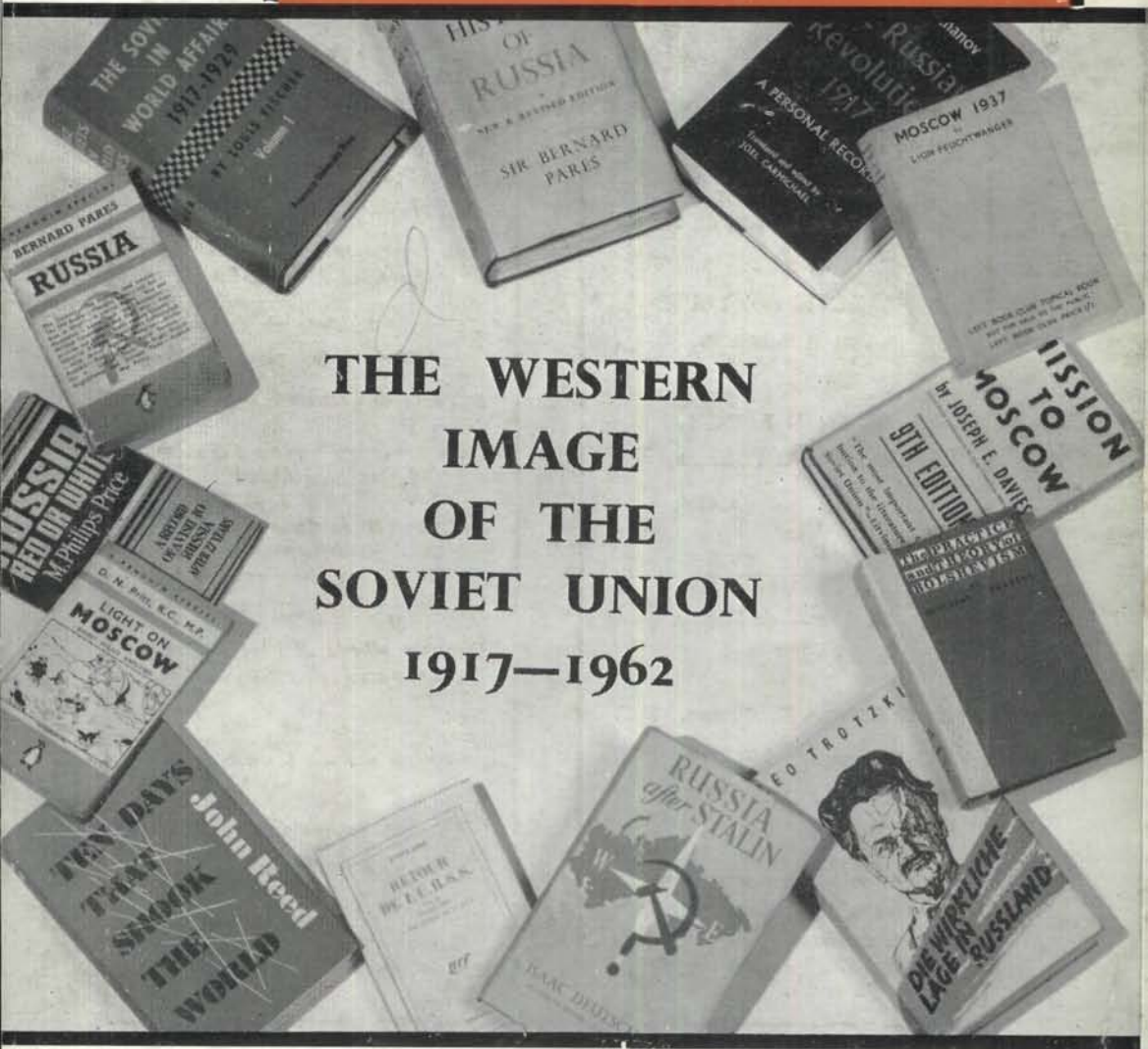

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SURVEY

A Journal of Soviet and East European Studies

No. 41 **April 1962**

Editor: Walter Z. Laqueur **Associate Editor: Leopold Labedz**

Russia through Western Eyes ..... *Walter Laqueur* 3

Witnesses of the Revolution ..... *M. Philips Price* 14

Trotsky on Stalin's Russia ..... *S. Bahne* 27

The Three Faces of Lenin ..... *Daniel Aaron* 43

The Webbs and the New Civilisation ..... *Marcel Liebman* 58

The Days of the Left Book Club ..... *Alfred Sherman* 75

How they saw the Moscow Trials ..... *Hugo Dewar* 87

1939: Whither Russia? ..... *Max Shachtman* 96

The Literature of Disenchantment ..... *K. A. Jelenski* 109

Deutscher as Historian and Prophet ..... *Leopold Labedz* 120

On reading Tertz ..... *Stefan Bergholz* 145

You and I: A Story ..... *Abram Tertz* 151

Publishing in the USSR: Documents 162

Views and Reviews: Marxism as History—The Civil War—Religion in Russia—The Journalist's Guide—Pasternak—Herzen and Russian Socialism—Varga writes again—The Soviet Economy 176

Our Contributors ..... cover iii

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Vision and Reality

RUSSIA THROUGH WESTERN EYES

Walter Laqueur

For life moves out of a red flare of dreams
Into the common light of common hours . . .
W. B. Yeats, Land of Heart's Desire

IN the preface to his *Histories of the Latin and Germanic Nations from 1494 to 1514*, Ranke wrote that to history has been assigned the office of judging the past and instructing the present for the benefit of future ages. The passage that follows is perhaps the most famous in all historical literature: 'To such high office this work does not aspire: It seeks only to show what actually happened (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*)'. Most historians since then have been more ambitious, though not necessarily more successful than Ranke: They *have* sought to instruct the present for the benefit of the future. The writing of Soviet history in the sense to which the present volume is devoted is a case in point. It is contemporary history, and the difficulties in writing it are twofold and well known; those who try to write *Zeitgeschichte* have as a rule less of the essential source material at their disposal than their colleagues dealing with the more remote past, and they lack distance from their subject, are prone to be more involved emotionally than is thought becoming by the purists.

Such obstacles do not obviate the necessity of writing contemporary history. The disparaging attitude towards it on the part of some members of the historical profession is of comparatively recent origin; Ranke, after all, wrote not only about the middle ages but also about the aftermath of the French revolution—events that happened in his own lifetime. Michelet and Thierry, Guizot and Mignet were all very much concerned with the France of their own period, and Lord Acton was preoccupied with the disputes then being fought out in the Catholic church. They would all have agreed with what a later day historian, Trevelyan, said about the virtue of detachment: 'dispassionateness—*nil admirare*—may betray the most gifted historian into missing some vital truth in his subject'. To Mr E. H. Carr, whose *History of Soviet Russia* is undoubtedly a very remarkable achievement, the same criticism applies as Trevelyan made with regard to Creighton's treatment of Luther—what he says is both fair and accurate, and yet from him alone one would hardly ever guess that he is dealing with a momentous and stirring movement in which great passions, much idealism and self-sacrifice—and their opposites—were involved. It is not the only criticism; Mr Carr

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is the antithesis to Cato, of whom it was said that *Victrix causa deis placuit sed victa Catoni.*

It is necessary to stress that dispassionateness in a historian is not the supreme value, for the impression may easily be gained that a greater measure of detachment would have resulted in a smaller measure of mistakes in so far as the Western image of the Soviet Union is concerned. This is not necessarily true, for it was not so much passionate involvement that produced error, as the inability or unwillingness of the writer to apply his critical faculties.

* * *

THERE is no time like the present to pause and re-examine some of the landmarks in Western writing about the Soviet Union. Not all the passion generated in the nineteen twenties and thirties has been spent, but the memories are beginning to fade as a generation grows up for whom not only Trotsky but even Stalin is past history. Some of the essential facts, bitterly contested only yesterday, are to-day no longer disputed—the purges of the thirties and the Moscow trials, for instance. In the following symposium some of the books published between the October revolution and Stalin's death that attracted much attention at the time have been subjected to critical analysis. This is not an exercise in historical one-upmanship; with the advantage of hindsight, nothing would be easier than to hold up to ridicule the false prophets of yesteryear. Some of the commentators were remarkably correct in their prognostications, and where others went wrong there is usually a lesson to be drawn for our time. The 20th, and to an even greater extent the 22nd Soviet party congress have opened fresh vistas; this then is the time for an interim account.

* * *

RUSSIA belongs to the group of countries to which students of metaphysics have attributed a historical mission and a destiny. This goes back to the days when the idea of a Third Rome was first conceived; some, like Gogol, compared it to a troika at full gallop of which nobody knew the destination. Others, more specific, regarded Russia alternatively as the scourge of the West and its saviour. Outside Russia, too, speculation about its historical role and future dates back at least three centuries: it occupied poets and pamphleteers in Britain, diplomats and essayists in France, and in Germany it became something in the nature of a popular sport on a national scale. Did Russia belong to the West or the East?

Briton and Russian differ but in name
In nature's sense all nations are the same,

Aaron Hill wrote in a poem in 1718 dedicated to Peter I, who was called by another contemporary, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'le plus barbare de tous les hommes'. In the nineteenth century Russia was the great bogy for most European democrats and liberals, though there

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were some dissenting voices; Heine regarded Tsarist absolutism as the best ally of the European revolution in its struggle against the old order. Ernest Coeurderoy, a Frenchman, wrote a remarkable pamphlet in 1854, *Hourra, ou la revolution par les Cosaques,* in which he welcomed the 'proletarians of the North' as allies in the struggle against the decayed culture of the West.[1] Some recently rediscovered philosophers of history of the 19th century, such as Vollgraff and Lasaulx, developed most detailed theories about the decline of the West and the rise of the East, anticipating much that has been said in our time by Spengler and Toynbee.

* * *

EVERYBODY is free to speculate on the future of one particular country or of the world in general. But unless he is proved right by the subsequent course of events even the most ingenious arguments and the most relentless logic will soon be forgotten by all but the professional historians of ideas. It is a risky pastime in which few reputations are made but many undone, and if political analysis and predictions are hazardous in days of peace and calm they become even more difficult in times of unrest and revolution. And yet it is precisely in times of revolution that people are most acutely confronted with the great issues of the day. The French revolution is the classical example: nobody in Europe could stay aloof. Eloquent witnesses have told us how it appeared to the enthusiasts—and who was not an enthusiast in that blissful dawn? Klopstock, no less sympathetic than Wordsworth, spoke for the majority of German *Dichter und Denker* when he wrote:

Frankreich schuf sich frei. Des Jahrhunderts
edelste Tat hub da sich zum Olympus empor!

Recently attention has again been drawn to the immense popularity in Britain of the French revolution in its early days, not only among literary and artistic circles. 'It seemed to mark the end of that medieval obscurantism in institutions and beliefs associated with the ancient regime. It symbolised the destruction of despots in Church and State, and the chance of an era in which human personality, freed from the shackles of the past, could achieve a new fulfilment.'[2]

The discussions and controversies about the French revolution in England and Germany as well as in other countries bear a certain resemblance to the debates on Soviet communism in the twenties and thirties. Burke had as little feeling and understanding as some 20th-century conservatives for the existence of a 'revolutionary situation' and attributed all that happened to individual wickedness. The Declaration of the Rights of Man was a great historical event, and Thomas Paine was right in saying so, but it came to mean little under the Committee

1 Dieter Groh: *Russland und das Selbstverstaendnis Europas* (1961); J. H. Gleason, *The Genesis of Russophobia in Great Britain* (1950); P. Scheibert, *From Bakunin to Lenin*, vol. I (1956).

2 J. H. Plumb, *England in the eighteenth century* (1950).

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of Public Safety and under Napoleon. It is more difficult to understand how Sidney Webb (to name but one) could have accepted the Stalin Constitution at its face value. The Russian revolution had its Koblenz and its Rivarol as well as its Marat and Desmoulins; it too devoured its children, but by now the purgers of the purgers have also been purged and the émigrés never went back.

The French revolution was welcomed by public opinion in Europe in its overwhelming majority, though most of its admirers had had second thoughts by 1792; the Russian revolution was hailed by a minority only; it won enthusiastic support only much later, and under the impact of events outside Russia itself, in the 'popular front' period and during the second world war.

* * *

THE writing of history is by its very nature selective. No work of research can possibly record every opinion uttered in connection with a certain event—nor indeed is it desirable that it should do so. The essays presented here concentrate on some significant views that were voiced outside Russia and outside the communist parties; obviously there is not much point in re-examining the products of a lunatic fringe, or the deliberate lies that were spread; the story about the nationalisation of women in Moscow, Kiev, and Odessa is probably the best remembered incident. But there is a world of difference between a deliberate lie systematically spread by the propaganda apparatus of a totalitarian country and the occasional misstatements of journalists writing for the more sensationalist press-organs in a democratic world.

The Soviet Union was much sinned against in its early days, and Bolshevik propaganda has made full use of the inventions and distortions of its foes. The very first editorial on the revolution in the London *Morning Post* was headed 'Revolution Made in Germany', and many other contemporary observers commented in a similar vein.[3] Most commentators did not stop to consider the revolution outside the narrow framework of the shifting day-to-day fortunes of the first world war and thus altogether missed its enormous political and social significance.

Much of the early criticism was based on misinformation on Russian affairs and a total ignorance of even the elementary principles of Marxism, and betrayed a total lack of political imagination. The Soviet experiment, it was said, could not work; the city editor of the London *Daily News* (not a very hostile paper) returned from Moscow and

[3] Cf. M. M. Karlinder, 'Oktyabrskaya Revoliutsiya i angliskaya burzhuaznaya pechat' in the *Festschrift* devoted to the memory of F. A. Rotshtein, *Imperializm i borba rabochevo klassa* (Moscow 1960), and Stephen R. Graubard, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution* (1956), *passim*. The *Morning Post* blamed 'Russian Jews of German extraction', *The Times* blamed Kerensky for lack of firmness, the British Liberal newspapers blamed the British government for hostility to the Russian Provisional Government, and Brailsford, writing in the *Herald*, said that Lenin's and Trotsky's 'real crime against Russia is that they have followed Kornilov in perpetuating an epoch of violence'. See Richard H. Ullman, *Intervention and the War*.

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reported 'Communism fails because it is an impracticable ideal'.[4] This was but one voice of many and the arguments in support of this thesis make strange reading thirty or forty years later: Communism was bound to fail because it was too egalitarian, everybody earned the same, there was no incentive to produce; planned economy was a chimera that could never be realised; Russia would soon return to its old nationalist tradition; Ustryalov in Harbin and his friends of the *Smena Vekh* in Prague were already packing their bags to return. At one time it was believed that the Soviet government would soon orientate itself towards the new NEP bourgeoisie; meditating in front of the Kremlin in 1927, M. Alfred Fabre Luce reported that Stalin was regarded as 'le roi des kulaks'. Right-wing extremists regarded the whole affair as a conspiracy by the Elders of Zion carried out by the three Jews, Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky. The public image of the Bolshevik was fairly accurately depicted in some of the novels of John Buchan and Sapper's Bulldog Drummond—communism was a synonym for anarchism, a conspiracy to throw the whole world into a state of chaos.

This early period of know-nothingism not unnaturally played into the hand of the communists; as time passed and the 'Soviet experiment' achieved some spectacular economic and military successes, as it was realised that Russia was neither a paradise of free love nor a heaven for the anarchists, the inclination grew to dismiss criticism of Russia and Soviet communism altogether. As a result, the Soviet Union under Stalin began to attract more support than it did under Lenin.

* * *

THE fascination exerted on so many Western intellectuals by Stalin, and by Russia under Stalin, is a complex phenomenon which cannot be explained by any single formula; different people were attracted by different aspects. Lion Feuchtwanger, a sensitive writer and the author of a number of eminently readable historical novels, was not a communist, certainly not a Stalinist, before he went to Moscow in 1937. What did he see, how was he impressed at the height of the purges?

'The whole big city of Moscow breathed satisfaction and agreement, more than that, happiness'—Feuchtwanger wrote. And again: 'Whoever has eyes to see and ears to hear, to differentiate between the genuine and the spurious, feels at every step that the phrases about "the happy life" are no mere idle talk.'

What about Stalin and the Stalin cult?

'The people feel the urge to express their gratitude to Stalin, their boundless admiration.'

Not that Stalin really wanted so much adulation:

'He is particularly reserved . . . It manifestly annoys Stalin to be deified.'

How to explain the purges and the show trials?

[4] *Daily News*, June 3, 1924.

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> Some of my friends, otherwise not unreasonable people, find the trials from beginning to end, in both their content and their form tragicomic, barbaric, incredible, and monstrous . . . But when I attended the second trial in Moscow my doubts dissolved like salt in water under the impression of what Radek and his friends said. If these were lies, or somehow prearranged, then I don't know what is truth.

To those obstinate Western intellectuals who persevered nevertheless in their doubts and maintained that Stalin's despotism and terror were but the expression of his lust for power, Feuchtwanger said reprovingly:

> Such rigmarole shows ignorance of the human soul and lack of judgment. One need only look at any book, any speech by Stalin, one need only recall any specific step he has taken in connection with the reconstruction of the USSR, and it emerges beyond any shadow of doubt that this wise, superior man cannot possibly have committed the colossal stupidity of staging such a clumsy comedy with the help of countless collaborators.[5]

Lion Feuchtwanger was not the most extreme case; there were many like him in Paris, London, and New York willing to give Stalin not merely the benefit of the doubt but the most enthusiastic support. It was a voluntary abdication of critical faculties, a *trahison des clercs* comparable only to the attitudes revealed by so many German intellectuals in 1933. If mitigating circumstances can be found for intellectuals in a totalitarian country, it is difficult to find an excuse for those who had the opportunity to choose.

Admittedly, one is always tempted to underrate the role of stupidity in human affairs. But Harold Laski (to name but one) was a highly intelligent man, and in contrast to Feuchtwanger the litterateur, he had made a lifelong study of politics, national and international. And yet the same Laski reported after a visit to Stalin's Russia in the middle thirties,

> Basically I did not observe much difference between the general character of a trial in Russia and in this country.

The Soviet courts, he observed, were much more concerned with prevention and cure than with deterrence and punishment. Nobody was more concerned with the prevention of crime than Mr Vyshinsky, with whom Professor Laski had a long and amicable conversation:

> I was predisposed to think of him essentially in his capacity as prosecutor. . . . I found him a man whose passion was law reform. No one I met was more open about the weaknesses of the system, no one more clear about the steps he wanted to take for their improvement. He was doing what an ideal Minister of Justice would do if we had such a person in Great Britain—forcing his colleagues to consider what is meant by actual experience of the law in action. He brought to the study of the law in operation an energy which we have not seen in this country since the days of Jeremy Bentham.[6]

[5] Lion Feuchtwanger, *Moskau 1937*, pp. 14, 20, 77, 82, 141.
[6] Harold J. Laski, *Law and Justice in Soviet Russia* (1935), p. 21.

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Vyshinsky-Bentham as the ideal Minister of Justice in Great Britain —it was a daring and original suggestion, but no more so than many of the statements of the Webbs and Professor Cole and many others in the West at the time.

* * *

THESE then were the intellectuals, who in the name of progress and idealism declared their support for Josef Stalin. But there were others who were neither highbrows nor progressives and yet reached similar conclusions. Walter Duranty, for many years correspondent of the *New York Times* in Moscow, expressed the views of many when he wrote: 'I don't care a whoop for socialism or totalitarianism, or any of their "isms".'

But on Stalin he said:

> I backed Stalin the way you back a horse until you think of it as 'your horse', though it may belong to Whitney or Widener or someone; you think of it as your horse, because you always backed it. That's how I felt about Russia, that's how I feel about Stalin.[7]

One such realist who did not care a whoop for socialism (because inter alia he was a multi-millionaire) and who yet regarded Stalin as his own horse, was Joseph E. Davies, American Ambassador in Moscow in the late thirties. He was a lawyer, and sitting in at the trials he reached the 'reluctant conclusion that the state had established its case':

> On the face of the record in this case it would be difficult for me to conceive of any court, in any jurisdiction doing other than adjudging the defendants guilty of violations of the law as set forth in the indictment and as defined by the statutes.[8]

If at the time of the Radek-Pyatakov trial the situation still had Ambassador Davies guessing ('the simple fact is that ordinary psychology does not apply in this situation', p. 117), his doubts were dispersed by the Bukharin trial.

> All the fundamental weaknesses and vices of human nature, personal ambitions at their worst, are shown up in the proceedings. They disclose the outlines of a plot which came very near to being successful in bringing about the overthrow of the government. This testimony now makes it clear what we could not understand and what happened last spring and summer. . . . But the government acted with great vigour and speed. . . . Then it came out that quite a few of those at the top were seriously infected with the virus of conspiracy to overthrow the government and were actually working with the Secret Service organisations of Germany and Japan. . . . Quite frankly we can't blame the powers that be much for reacting in this way if they believed what is now divulged at the trial (p. 177).

[7] Walter Duranty, *The Kremlin and the people* (1942), p. 15.
[8] Joseph E. Davies, *Mission to Moscow* (1942), vol. I, p. 39.

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Thus Ambassador Davies to his daughter Emlen on 8 March 1938. Three years later Mr Davies gave a talk to the University of Wisconsin Club:

> It was just three days after Hitler had invaded Russia. Someone in the audience asked, 'What about Fifth Columnists in Russia?' Off the anvil I said: There aren't any—they shot them (p. 179).

Ambassador Davies' book was generally acclaimed as an authoritative work by most of the world's press at the time of its appearance.

* * *

NEITHER Feuchtwanger nor Laski nor Ambassador Davies had any background knowledge of Russia; they did not speak the language and had not spent any length of time in the country before. But such background knowledge was absolutely essential, as Professor Pares once pointed out:

> One can always see at once whether anyone talking of Russia has really lived there; it is a kind of freemasonry independent both of class and views.[9]

Professor Pares certainly knew Russia from his frequent visits, beginning as a student at Moscow University in 1898; he was the author of many historical studies and towards the end of his life generally recognised as the leading British expert on Russia and the Soviet Union. This Russian expertise had only one major flaw; it did not care a whoop (as Mr Duranty would have put it) for socialism or Marxism or any other ism or ideology (though he hardly ever put it so bluntly); it was good old-fashioned empiricism, interested in actions, not in words.

> If we regard his actions rather than his words (one of Professor Pares' favourite sayings whenever dealing with Stalin) it appeared that he [Stalin] has changed his course steadily and radically [away from Leninism].

Russia under Stalin appeared to Professor Pares

> as a nearer approach to true democracy than the liberal movement before the revolution; for then liberalism was a theory where the sense of its responsibilities was lacking, and now we are beginning to see that material of character and purpose out of which true democracy can be made.[10]

Of the trials and purges Pares took the conventional view:

> Zinoviev was now finally brought to book and died, still fawning, like the coward that he had always been. . . . Nearly all the accused admitted having done so [conspiring] and on this point it is not necessary that we should doubt them, in whatever way their evidence was originally obtained. The bulky verbatim reports were in any case impressive.[11]

9 Bernard Pares, *Russia* (1940), p. 256.
10 *Russia and the Peace* (1944), p. 33.
11 *Russia*, p. 262. Pares was so impressed by Radek's 'confession' that he had it reproduced in *The Slavonic Review* (April 1937). Sir John Maynard also shed 'Light

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Of all the stupid comments made at the time this one surely deserves to be repeated and remembered: 'The bulky verbatim reports were in any case impressive.' Such pearls of wisdom were the outcome of fifty years of study of Russian history, of the Russian people, its country, its language.

About the post-war world and Russia's role in it Professor Pares was very optimistic; did not the three major allies have certain principles in common? 'All three have alike had to grapple with the inescapable problem of reconciling a federal system with regional independence.'

One could have thought of a great many other similarities, such as the common need to build schools, to grow tomatoes, or to produce toilet paper. As for Stalin and his policy in the post-war world, Professor Pares thought

> that his deeds have been much more enlightening than his words. He has already travelled very far in very definite directions. To judge by his past, my forecast of his future action would be: He has shown that his heart is in his own country, that he has set his reputation on a purely practical object of vast scope, its radical transformation for the benefit of all. Then he will need world peace. . . . He can be credited with the good sense to see that he too must play his part in the building of world peace. . . . It would not be sense to bring Poles or Czechs under Russian rule.[12]

* * *

SOMETIMES, like the priest in Don Quixote's library, one gets tired of taking down from the shelves one book after another, to pass judgment on each, and feels inclined to pronounce sentence *en masse*. But that is hardly the way to do justice to those that cannot be classified by accepted norms and standards—Rosa Luxemburg, for instance, a 'Westerner' and yet very close to the bolsheviks, who, in her little book on the Russian revolution, written in 1918, was acutely aware of what was in store for the young Soviet republic. At that time these were solitary voices in the multitude that looked at Russia either with utter incomprehension or with uncritical and reverent adulation.

What then is the state of affairs forty-five years later?

All things considered, the general level of comment on and understanding of the Soviet Union has risen since the nineteen thirties. Partly this must be attributed to the late Josef Stalin who, especially in his later years, compelled even the most starry-eyed and reluctant to re-examine their attitude. Partly it is the result of the collection by specialists over twenty or twenty-five years of a great amount of factual material on things Soviet, from the working of the Soviet railway system to the details

on the Trotskyist Trials' (*Political Quarterly*, July 1937): '. . . the confessions have not been of the defiant kind. Rather they have been of the penitent kind, of a sinner making a clean breast of his sins and extenuating nothing'.

12 *Russia and the Peace*, p. 192.

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of Soviet primary education. It is easy to scoff at these sometimes over-specialised studies, for taken alone, none greatly contributes to our understanding of the 'Socialist Sixth'; but, taken together, they constitute an impressive body of knowledge. True enough, too little of this has so far filtered down to the general public, or even to many students of world affairs who should know better; but it makes a cumulative impact that should not be underrated. Many more people now read Russian (including Soviet newspapers and magazines), and the study of Soviet affairs, in general, has spread widely. Before the second world war, the study of the USSR, its institutions, economy, and cultural life, did not exist as a scientific discipline. Today, of course, all this has changed, and as a result de-mythologisation is by now fairly advanced. There still is a great deal of ignorance in newspapers and books and on the radio and television where Russia is concerned, and some of the old warhorses are still with us, though with a smaller public in Europe. In the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa, too, public opinion is becoming sophisticated at a surprisingly fast pace. Granted that Western expertise on Russia every few years brings forth a strange crop of amateur commentators (ranging from Dr Fromm and Viscount Montgomery to the Birch Society), but they have little influence on informed public opinion. Some of the grosser acts of folly, at any rate, are unlikely to be repeated.

Whole libraries have been written on the Soviet Union since 1917; all we have tried to do here is to reassess some of the more important and widely read books of the last 45 years. Some of great interest have been left out: there is nothing here on Kautsky and his exchanges with Trotsky and other Soviet leaders in the early twenties, nor on Otto Bauer; nothing on the Russian emigration with its various factions and theories. Nor have the debates of the late thirties been discussed in detail, when a great measure of ingenuity was invested in attempts to define the political, social, and economic character of the Soviet system (Hilferding's famous essay). The essay on the popular front in Britain and its attitude towards Russia does not mention, for instance, some important and influential dissenting voices in the camp of Labour, such as the late Evan Durbin's work on democratic socialism. All this now belongs to history, and may warrant re-examination and reappraisal one of these days. Nor has it been the intention of the writers in the present volume to lay down a generally valid 'correct line of approach'. The authors belong to different generations: when Mr Philips Price saw Lenin and Trotsky in the Kremlin in 1917 some of the other contributors were not yet born. They belong to different and in some cases opposing schools of thought: some of the essays have been written from a left-wing socialist point of view, others display no particular sympathy for socialism in any shape. We have not provided a party line but a forum for a long overdue reassessment of views expressed and comments made in past decades. Men and women of different political philosophies have reached and will

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continue to reach different conclusions about various aspects of the Soviet regime. This is as it should be; our intention here was only to show that a political engagement based on prejudice, illusions, wishful thinking, and, sometimes, as in the case of the Moscow trials, on wilful perversion of the truth, has little value and will not endure. In a wider perspective, it is even self-defeating. For it is surely comforting that, in an otherwise cynical age, truth does come to light sooner or later; however great the success of Webb's book at the time, it has since become something of a joke, and even the most hardened apologists of the Moscow trials do not now feel very proud of what they said and wrote at the time. Historical truth advances at an agonisingly slow pace, but, taking it all in all, it does make progress. In this sense the study of Western writing on the Soviet Union during the last 45 years offers a lesson and a challenge, to be ignored only at considerable risk. Ignorance in this respect (as in others) is not innocence but sin.

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WITNESSES OF THE REVOLUTION

M. Philips Price

SUFFICIENT water has flowed under the bridges of the Neva for it to be possible now to make an appraisal of the October Revolution in an atmosphere of relative objectivity. Possibly the best way to do this is to make a study of what people who were in Petrograd (as it then was called) and Moscow at the time thought and wrote about it then. Even more interesting is it to see how far what they said and predicted has been proved right with the passage of time. In the following pages I am going to make an attempt along these lines, and to do so I have examined the books of a number of people who were in Russia then and who were either journalists reporting to their papers or authors who made special journeys to see the new social system which had just established itself in eastern Europe.

My first task seems to be to re-review two books, one by an American and one by an Englishman, both of whom actually saw the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks at close quarters. The first was John Reed and the second myself. There was another Englishman, Arthur Ransome, who was also there and saw it as we did, but unfortunately he wrote no book about his experiences then. He wrote an important one, which I examine later, when he made a special visit some eighteen months after the establishment of the Soviet regime. He was the correspondent at the time of the old Liberal organ, the *Daily News*. John Reed came to Russia as the correspondent of the American socialist paper, *The Masses*. I was the correspondent in Russia all through the war years of the *Manchester Guardian*.[1]

Reed was a first-class journalist and his book, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, is a most vivid description of what happened. It covers actually rather more than ten days and brilliantly describes the actions and reactions of the participants in that titanic upheaval. His own opinions are kept quite in the background but it is possible to find them if one reads the book carefully. He remains a Western journalist all through and keeps all Marxist jargon out, but here and there one can read his feelings, emotions, and opinions. They were entirely with the new regime, so much so, in fact, that he got Lenin to write a foreword to the book.

[1] There was also another American, Albert Rhys Williams, who was in Russia during the October Revolution, and wrote *Through the Russian Revolution* (I obtained a copy only after this article had gone to press). Williams went to Russia in 1917 and left via Vladivostok in July 1918. The book consists of descriptions of what he saw, interspersed with expressions of strong sympathy with the revolution. He witnessed the seizure of power in Petrograd, and his writing bears some similarity to that of John Reed. But it is too rambling to serve as a source for history, and there is no attempt to analyse the problems facing the revolutionary leaders.

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There is a significant passage in the Preface. It makes the bold assertion that the propertied classes in Russia were so unbalanced by hatred of the revolutionary movement that they 'disorganised transport, provoked internal trouble . . . broke up Army Committees . . . and connived at military defeat'. That was a strong thing to say but it was proved perfectly correct in the event. When the German army marched into the Ukraine and the Allies intervened at Archangel, the Russian middle classes showed their preference for foreign bayonets against their own people. But another passage in the Preface shows less realism. It says: 'In every country in the world today the same phenomenon is visible'. Here Reed shows that he was under the influence of the Bolshevik theory that world revolution was bound up with the Russian Revolution. Events have shown the contrary, namely, that the rest of the world has gone a different way from Russia and that, where communism has been established in Eastern Europe, it has happened only as a result of Russia's forceful intervention. But again he showed a correct appraisal of what was happening when he wrote: 'The Bolsheviks were the only party in Russia with a constructive programme and the power to impose it on the country. If they had not succeeded to the Government when they did, there is little doubt that the armies of Imperial Germany would have been in Petrograd and Moscow in December 1917, and Russia would be ridden again by the Tsar'. Reed believed that no other party in Russia was sufficiently able and determined to stop the chaos in the country by hacking its way to power and forming a centre of order and government.

One of the conditions that precipitated the October Revolution was the breakdown of the primitive economy of old Russia as a result of two-and-a-half years of a devastating war. Reed saw this: 'Vast Russia was in a state of dissolution. As long ago as 1905 the process had begun. The March Revolution merely hastened it but ended by perpetuating the hollow structure of the old regime. Now, however, the Bolsheviks in one night had dissipated it as one blows away smoke. Old Russia was no more. Human society flowed molten in a primeval heat and from the tossing sea of flame was emerging the class struggle, dark and pitiless, and the fragile, slow-cooling crust of the new planets'. When one remembers that the Western world was regarding the October Revolution as a disorder caused by a clique of 'adventurers', who by their activities had brought on the desertions from the army, the collapse of transport and the breakdown of industry, one sees how right Reed was to attack this myth and show the Revolution in the shape that it really had.

He exposed the hollowness of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party and by implication pointed to its almost certain demise, which actually took place less than six months after he wrote his book. He describes meeting one of its leaders after the publication of the Bolshevik Decree on the Land, giving the Land Committees the right to take over the landlord's estate and divide it among the peasants. The Socialist-Revolutionary

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Party had originally advocated this but had never, under Kerensky, dared to do anything about it. The Socialist-Revolutionary leaders were furious at the Bolsheviks stealing their thunder and Reed describes their impotent rage. He foresaw the steady elimination of this once powerful party.

THE other writer during the early period of the October Revolution was myself. What I wrote can be seen in the despatches and articles in the *Manchester Guardian* during 1917 and up to the autumn of 1918, and in a book published in 1921 called *My Reminiscences of the Russian Revolution,* containing a good deal of *Manchester Guardian* material. Like John Reed, I show strong sympathy with the October Revolution and the Bolshevik regime, but I was less restrained than he was. I did not let the narrative speak for itself, but expounded my own views, as if I had been listening to the speeches of Lenin and Trotsky and were repeating something of what I had heard. Moreover, the book contains fairly extensive passages of communist jargon which I had picked up in those two years. I had become, in fact, a 'fellow-traveller', and the book loses a good deal of the objectivity found in some other books of that and the later periods for that reason. On the other hand, it is the only book that covers an extensive period beginning with the fall of the Tsar, the Kerensky regime, and the first year of the Bolsheviks. It is, in fact, the only foreign eye-witness account of the first eighteen months of the Revolution. Moreover, the book does contain objective passages and these are mostly in the despatches that I sent to the *Manchester Guardian* during the autumn and winter of 1917 and the spring and summer of 1918. There I was a reporter, obviously much in sympathy with the new regime in Russia, like John Reed, but observing some degree of caution.

The book is consequently rather a hotchpotch and the reason is not far to seek. It was written in 1920 when I had come out of Russia and was in Germany. I had been much embittered by the frustration I had suffered during the last few months that I was in Russia. My despatches to the *Manchester Guardian* had been stopped by the British censor and although some of them reached C. P. Scott, the editor, and he had wanted to publish them, he was prevented from doing so. I then became aware of the fact that a conspiracy of silence had been decided upon about the war of intervention which the Western Allies had forced upon the new regime in Russia. Only reports favourable to the intervention were allowed and these were retailed extensively in the Northcliffe press and by Horatio Bottomley. The state of Britain at that time was about as low as it could well be. The people were restless, not having experienced a great war for over a century, and dangerous demagogues had got control of the organs of opinion. I realised after a while what I was up against but, being young and feeling deeply that the October Revolution was a heroic attempt to free the Russian people from degradation and despair, I resented bitterly what I regarded as the

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wickedness of the Allied intervention. I was not going to be silent, or even tone down what I wanted to say. This state of affairs caused me to adopt the tone and jargon of the Bolsheviks, and consequently what I wrote at the time lost some of its value and did not have the effect and influence that it might have had.

At the same time, I do not regret one word that I wrote then, and I am certain that, on most issues, my attitude turned out to be the correct one. I was the only journalist of the English-speaking world in Russia at that critical time of the intervention and so I felt an added duty to write as I did.

Soon after the Bolshevik seizure of power I sent a despatch to the *Manchester Guardian* which, on reading it today, seems accurately to reflect the causes of the Revolution. The following are extracts:

> The Government of Kerensky fell before the Bolshevik insurgents because it had no supporters in the country. The bourgeois parties and the generals of the Staff disliked it because it would not establish a military dictatorship. The Revolutionary Democracy lost faith in it because, after eight months, it had neither given land to the peasants nor established State control of industries, nor advanced the cause of the Russian peace programme. Instead it brought off the July advance without any guarantee that the Allies had agreed to consider war aims . . . The Bolsheviks had meanwhile acquired great support all over the country. In my journey in the Provinces in September and October I noticed that several local Soviets had been captured by them. The Executive Committee of the All Russian Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates elected last summer clearly did not represent the feeling of the revolutionary masses in October. The Bolsheviks, therefore, insisted on a re-election and the summoning of the second All Russian C.W.S.D. Congress, the Right Wing of the Socialist parties opposing this . . . Though supported by the masses the Bolsheviks now find themselves isolated from the Right Wing of the Socialists, who represent the small bourgeois and intellectuals who control the Government machinery . . . The All Russian Railway Union and the party of Socialist Internationalists led by Gorky's paper, the *Novaya Zhizn* are making desperate efforts to bring about a reconciliation . . . but they cannot come to terms on the details of the composition of the Government. Meanwhile, the food shortage becomes more acute.

Commenting on the peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk in my book and in *Manchester Guardian* despatches, I gave what turned out to be a fairly accurate forecast of the dilemma facing the Bolsheviks in their negotiations with the German General Hoffman: 'My impression is that the German General Staff, relying on the desire of the Russian soldier for peace at any price, is trying to isolate the Russian Revolution and reap its own harvest of advantages from the situation thus created. Thus the Soviet Government, lured by the German Imperialists, pushed by the Russian soldiery, and deserted by the Allied democracies, is forced to open separate peace negotiations'.

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During the critical time of the Brest-Litovsk negotiations, followed by the German ultimatum and the strikes in Berlin and Vienna, I was clearly influenced in what I wrote by the prevailing optimism of the Bolsheviks, who thought that their theory of the world revolution and the salvation of the Russian Revolution was the only correct one. Thus I say: 'The world revolution in the immediate future is, indeed, a possibility if not a probability, and it is not unreasonable for responsible Russian revolutionaries to build their immediate policy upon the chances of its outbreak'. Yet I also sounded a realistic note when I wrote in another passage: 'The Revolution is living in great hopes, one might almost say illusions, in these days'. As we all know, a few days later the German and Austrian strikes collapsed and the German Generals were in a position to dictate terms of peace to the Russians.

In the period following the Brest-Litovsk treaty, I described in some detail the attitude of the two parties ruling Russia at that time, the Bolsheviks and the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, to the land question. I do not think this was set forth by any other observer at that time. I emphasise the fact that the non-Marxist revolutionaries were being allowed by the Bolsheviks, who had their hands full elsewhere, to run the land policy and influence the villages. The idea of equal land divisions and allotments rather than State farms was put into force. This was not the Bolshevik idea, but the important point that I brought out was that, at this period of the Revolution, the Bolsheviks were not the only power in the Government and that on agrarian policy attempts were being made to put into practice the theories of those who still followed the Narodniks and the Land and Liberty movement of the last part of the nineteenth century. The break between these old revolutionaries and the Bolsheviks had not yet taken place. I do not know of anyone else at that time who brought out these facts.

ANOTHER feature of that period of the revolution was the relation between Russia on the one hand and the Germans and the Western Allies on the other. I throw a little light on that both in my book and in *Manchester Guardian* despatches. There had been reports that Trotsky at this time was considering accepting military help and supplies from the Western Allies if Germany did not stop her advance into south-east Russia. Colonel Robins of the American Red Cross had been active in this connection and had proposed assistance of this kind to prevent Russia from signing the Brest-Litovsk treaty. But the United States Government did not move and the treaty was signed. Yet the German advance continued and I report in a *Manchester Guardian* despatch early in June an interview I had with the Russian Foreign Commissar, Chicherin, in which I asked him how the Western Allies could assist Russia in her present plight. The gist of Chicherin's reply was that the Allies must first recognise the Soviet Government. He added that Russia would accept assistance from any government, German or Allied, against aggression by either group of powers. After the publication of this

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despatch C. P. Scott, the editor, telegraphed me asking me to find out if the Soviet Government would enter into economic relations with Great Britain and what practical steps could be suggested. I therefore sought another interview with Chicherin and asked him this. The reply which I telegraphed to Manchester was to the effect that the Soviet Government needed agricultural implements and machinery to repair the railways. The Soviet Government could offer certain raw materials and timber concessions. This despatch was not published, for it was stopped by the British censor. Soon after this the military intervention of the Western Allies against the Soviet Government was launched. A British economic mission, however, had arrived in Moscow on 29 June to discuss the plans which Chicherin had outlined to me. I went to see them and found that, although they had just arrived in Moscow, they had received a telegram ordering them to return at once and not to open negotiations after all. That night news arrived in Moscow that British and French troops had landed at Murmansk and Archangel. My attempt to open out Anglo-Soviet economic relations failed, as did Colonel Robins' attempt earlier to do the same thing in American-Soviet relations. The Allied War Council in Paris had decided on military intervention, but the United States Government remained aloof from this and retired into silence.

My feelings at this time were shown in a despatch to the *Manchester Guardian* which had appeared on 3 June after the ratification by the Soviet Government of the Brest-Litovsk treaty. It reflected a certain pride that I had been proved right in my advice that the Soviet Government should be recognised as being the only stable centre of government in Russia and that economic relations should be started with it. It also reflects a certain cynical feeling that refusal to follow this advice had resulted in the collapse of all government except in Central Russia and the advance of the German Army almost to the Caucasus. The salient point of this despatch was the following:

> The collapse of the old Russian Empire and the falling away from Muscovy of the outer dependencies is an event of world-wide importance and seems to have taken the Western Allies by surprise. Nevertheless, it was foreseen by all who knew the internal condition of Russia during the last three years and the only thing that could have prevented this was a general democratic peace last year. But since Russia's allies declined to listen to warnings or to utilise the tendencies working for peace in Germany last summer in the interests of the Russian Revolution, the catastrophe has now come.
>
> The temporary paralysis of the economic life of great Russia, due to three years of war in an industrially undeveloped country, is now being fully exploited by the Central Powers to establish their dominion in Eastern Europe and Asia. The Soviet Government of great Russia, faced with famine at home, the collapse of transport and the stagnation of industry for want of raw material, was compelled to make a peace with the Central Powers last March and trust to the proletariate of Germany to secure their safety. But the latter

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> betrayed the Russian Revolution and bands of German soldiers and freebooters are now walking across the Russian plains into Asia unopposed by any effectual force.

At about the same time I described the revolt of the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, the old revolutionary peasant-intellectual movement with anarchist tendencies, against their colleagues, the Bolsheviks, in the Soviet Government. They had murdered the German Ambassador and attempted to seize strategic points in Moscow. This ended the revolutionary coalition. The Bolsheviks now carried on alone with all the world against them. I seem to have looked upon this as the 9th of Thermidor of the Russian Revolution and to have envisaged the coming of a Napoleon. In this I was wrong, at least for the near future. A poor edition of Napoleon appeared in Russia some years later in the form of Stalin.

Finally, at the end of my book, I wrote:

> The titanic work of the Soviets, watched as yet only with sympathetic interest by the Western proletariate, is arousing a passionate longing in the hearts of the dusky and yellow millions that live to the East of Muscovy. Was not the abortive Russian Revolution of 1905–6 followed by national upheavals in Turkey, Persia and China? Is it not almost as certain as the rising of the sun that in the continent where middle class revolutions have not yet penetrated, where the coolie and ryot still live in feudal agrarian castes, backed by the navies, armies and finance of Western European capitalism, the example of Moscow will not pass unheeded.

This was actually written a year later when I was out of Russia, and shows clearly that I was being influenced by communist ideas. I was also thinking that Asia would necessarily follow the Russian example and that communism would spread that way. I was influenced by the fact that there was no sign that communism would spread in the West, and in this I was right.

Arthur Ransome, who wrote *Six Weeks in Russia in 1919*, was in Russia during the early stages of the October Revolution along with John Reed and myself, but his book deals with a later period. I had left Russia at the end of 1918 and was no longer writing for the *Manchester Guardian*. Ransome, however, had become the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent in Russia throughout a part of 1919 and wrote this book, together with a number of articles and despatches. His attitude was that of an objective observer with broad liberal sympathies. He sympathised with the revolution but was sceptical of the theories and some of the practice of the Bolsheviks. He studied the revolution more as an artist than as a politician or journalist, looking at the human problems involved. He admired the pluck and courage of the Bolsheviks more than their ideas and theories. In this respect he differed somewhat from John Reed and myself, who had to some extent imbibed the doctrine of Marx during our time in Russia. Consequently, his testimony is more reliable than ours.

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PERHAPS his outlook is best described in a passage in the Preface to his book. It should be noted that, at the time he wrote this, the absurd and in some ways despicable propaganda was being put out that the Bolsheviks were paid agents of the Imperial German Government. That Lenin did take money from any source he could get it was well known, and that he travelled in a sealed coach through war-time Germany to get to Russia is also true. But one only had to see these men in action to realise that any money they received had no effect on their revolutionary plans. Ransome rejected absolutely this propaganda and goes on in the Preface to give his own ideas:

> I should have liked to explain what was the appeal of the Revolution to men like Colonel Robins and myself, both of us men far removed in origins and upbringing from the revolutionary and socialist movements in our own countries. Of course, no-one who was able, as we were, to watch the men of the Revolution at close quarters could believe for a moment that they were paid agents of the very power which more than all others represented the stronghold they had set out to destroy. We had the knowledge of the injustice being done to these men to urge us in their defence. But there was more in it than that. There was the feeling from which we could never escape of the creative effect of the Revolution. There was the thing which distinguishes the creative from other artists, the live, vivifying expression of something hitherto hidden in the consciousness of humanity.

Ransome interviewed some prominent Bolshevik Commissars and other public figures in Moscow, and the reports of his conversations with these people are interspersed with his own shrewd comments. One can see that Ransome, as a liberal, was sympathetic with what they were trying to do, but at times sceptical of what they could accomplish by these methods. His comments on the character of some of the Bolshevik leaders were especially astute.

He had several interviews with Lenin. The latter was clearly sceptical and did not think that Ransome would be allowed to tell the truth about the situation in Russia. He was suspicious of all Western governments and doubted if any journalist from these countries would dare to give his genuine views. Lenin was ignorant of the existence of liberal opinion in England which, sooner or later, would break through any attempt to muzzle it by censorship, even in war-time. He found it very hard to interpret the American, Colonel Robins, but he finally did seem to understand when Ransome told him that Robins could not go against a baby that he had sat up with for six months! Ransome goes on to show what he clearly saw as one of the great characteristics of Lenin—his sense of humour: 'He struck me as a happy man; every one of his wrinkles is a wrinkle of laughter and not of worry; the reason must be that he is the first great leader to utterly discount the value of his own personality. He is quite without personal ambition; more than that, he believes as a Marxist in the movement of the masses which, with or without him, would still move'.

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On one matter Ransome seems not to have understood the probable line of growth of the Soviet institutions. Actually, no other observers at that time did either. Speaking of the Supreme Council of National Economy, that department of government which aimed at controlling the economic life of the Republic, he seemed to take the view that this body would become 'more and more important in comparison with the Soviets, which in origin were not constructive but instruments of the Revolution, the hardest tasks of which had already been accomplished'. What, however, nobody at that time saw was that the real seat of power in Russia was going to be no department of government but the Communist Party. Lenin was already quietly pushing the Party functionaries into all important organs of the State, thus making the Party the sole source of authority.

On another matter, Ransome clearly forecast the line of development. While interviewing Rykov and discussing with him the economic plight of Russia, Rykov said that they hoped the Allies would make peace with them and give economic help in the form of much-needed machinery, for which they would pay in some materials and in concessions. Or if the Allies would not help, he thought Russia could manage, though more slowly and with difficulty, to get along and herself produce the things that she needed for her economic revival. This, in fact, is very much what happened, for trade with the West did not really get going for some years and meanwhile Russia was making for herself many things that she had never made before.

Ransome provides an interesting sidelight on the views of the Commissar of Finance, Krestinsky, whom he calls a 'curious little optimist'. Krestinsky had the idea of doing away with all money. 'The chief difficulty', he said, 'is food supplies which depend on our ability to keep up an exchange with the villages. You can fairly say that our ruin or salvation depends on a race between the decreasing value of money and our growing ability to do without it altogether.' Krestinsky was allowed to try out his ideas for a time, but the economic crisis of 1921 and the New Economic Policy meant the end of his experiments. In his interview with Mr Sereda, the Commissar of Agriculture, Ransome shows that in those days (1919) the Bolsheviks had no idea of forcing the peasants into collective farms. They had no intention of any such 'idiocy', he said, as an attempt to force the peasants to give up private ownership.

Ransome describes a meeting he attended of the Soviet Central Executive Committee and the controversy at that time raging between those like Lenin and Trotsky, who wanted experts of the old regime to help in reconstruction and were prepared to pay for it, and the puritans who regarded this as a betrayal of the Revolution. At this time the question was very acute. It was not generally realised in the outer world that the regime was fighting not only against the White counter-revolution but also against the extreme left, who looked upon the Bolsheviks as reactionaries. Ransome makes a shrewd comment upon the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, with whom the Bolsheviks had so

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much trouble in the coalition in the early days of the October Revolution. 'The Left Socialist-Revolutionaries', he said, 'want something so much like anarchy that they have nothing to fear in a collapse of the present system.' As for the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, he had already correctly written them off as not likely to play a further role in the Revolution. They had compromised themselves pretty badly, he said, when they sided with Kolchak before they realised how they were being used by the counter-revolution.

H. G. WELLS also went to Russia in 1919 and was there for some weeks. Like Ransome he sees and describes Russia in the process of trying to reconstruct its society and economy on socialist lines and at the same time to put off the counter-revolutionary Whites financed and supplied by Britain and France. As a Fabian, Wells was naturally sympathetic with collectivist ideas. His whole approach was strictly practical: he was concerned with the immediate task before the Soviet rulers. He was impressed by two things and they are constantly referred to in his book *Russia in the Shadows*. First, he was appalled by the vast and apparently irreparable breakdown of the whole society and economy of Russia. Secondly, he saw the Bolshevik Government as the only one capable of pulling Russia together again.

Wells deserves credit for strongly attacking the argument of those outside Russia who tried to make out that the poverty and ebbing energy of the country was due to Bolshevik rule. The real cause was 'an unsound system that had worked itself out and fallen down. It was not Communism that had plunged this huge, creaking and bankrupt empire into six years of exhausting war'. Wells was evidently uncertain whether the communists would pull Russia through. The words 'perhaps dying' and 'death-bed miseries' which he uses in describing the country show that he thought the chances were not better than even.

Wells was undoubtedly influenced by Gorki in his estimate of the situation in Russia. He describes how impressed he was with Gorki's extraordinary influence at that time. Though not a communist, he had openly come out in support of the communist Government on the ground that it was the only government that could save Russia. But he was openly critical of the crudities of communism and he was listened to and supported by Lenin. Gorki feared the decay of civilisation and culture in Russia, its reversion to barbarism, and the possibility that it would abandon Europe and retire into Asia. Wells too feared that unless the Western countries stopped the war of intervention and the blockade, Russia would gradually move her centre of gravity to the East and become increasingly an Asiatic power. Lenin once asked Wells why the social revolution did not break out in England. Wells replied that we did not think it necessary to destroy the social system in order to build socialism but we did believe it was possible to gradually transform capitalism. He could not convince Lenin and he ridiculed the Bolshevik belief that there were a number of convinced communists in

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Britain able to seize power. Yet he was to some extent optimistic, for he says that these Russian communists were 'holding to these beliefs though their hold was weakening'.

Wells was much impressed by the action of the Bolshevik Government, inspired by Gorki, in saving the intellectual and professional classes in Russia and especially the literary and artistic people. Hostels and food rations had been provided for them and they were engaged in compiling a large encyclopedia of the history of the world. He says correctly here that the more intelligent Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, were seriously concerned with the preservation of culture and did not define that state of enlightenment as something which would be enjoyed only by orthodox Marxists. On the other hand, Wells is contemptuous of some of the communists he met who were trying to prevent science being taught unless it was 'proletarian' science or music unless it was 'proletarian' music. At that time in Russia the question of technical help to the Soviet Government by the experts of the old regime was being hotly discussed. No decision was then taken. The issue was decided later and experts were brought in and paid good salaries, while doctrinaire party functionaries were quietly kept in their places. Wells attempts no prophecy of what would happen, but he shows clearly that he had little real hope for Russia unless she took help from whatever quarter she could get it.

BERTRAND RUSSELL, who went to Russia in 1919, called his book *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*. Of all the British and American authors and journalists who wrote during those years, Russell can be said to have been the most critical. He did not see the problem in Russia as one of practical measures. He was not an empiricist or a journalist reporting on day-to-day affairs. He was the philosopher probing deeply into first principles; and the more he saw, the less he liked what he saw. He was not prepared to make allowances, or to see in Russia a history and tradition totally different from that of the West. Thus he wrote in his Preface:

> I do not believe that by this method [Bolshevism] a suitable or desirable form of Socialism can be established. Three issues seem possible from the present situation. First is the ultimate defeat of Bolshevism by the forces of capitalism. The second is the victory of the Bolsheviks accompanied by a complete loss of their ideals and a return to Napoleonic imperialism. The third is a prolonged world war in which civilization will go under . . . I think the elements of failure [in Bolshevism] are less attributable to faults of detail than to an impatient philosophy which aims at creating a new world without sufficient preparation for the opinions and feelings of ordinary men and women . . . If Bolshevism fails, it will have contributed a legend and a heroic attempt without which ultimate success might never have come.

Russell emphasises the fact that Bolshevism differs from other movements in that it is not only a political doctrine but also a religion of

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elaborate dogmas and inspired scriptures. Russell thinks that the future happiness of the human race depends on the use of the scientific outlook, which creates 'constructive and fruitful scepticism'. Progress and enlightenment, both spiritual and material, will come when scientific enquiry is free. The adoption of a creed, even one aiming at the elimination of poverty, is self-defeating. Creeds make scientific enquiry impossible. But Russell was also impressed by the self-destructive tendencies of the Western world; he can certainly be excused for holding that the West was heading for collapse when he saw the Lloyd George coalition government in Britain with Horatio Bottomley and Lord Northcliffe dominating the political life of the country. 'There is no depth', he writes, 'of cruelty, perfidy and brutality from which the present holders of power will shrink when they feel themselves threatened . . . The present holders of power in the capitalist world are evil men and their present method of life is doomed.' He hoped the transition would take place with a minimum of bloodshed. 'I wish I could think that its solution would be facilitated by some degree of moderation and human feelings.' In this respect Russell's reaction to the 'evil people' in the West who instigated the war of intervention against the Russian Revolution was the same as mine. But the difference between us was that this caused me to embrace, temporarily at least, the doctrines of the Bolsheviks. Russell, on the other hand, kept his faith and remained sceptical of what the Bolsheviks could achieve. 'I cannot share the hopes', he writes, 'of the Bolsheviks any more than those of the Egyptian anchorites. I regard both as tragic illusions, destined to bring on the world centuries of darkness and futile violence. . . . The War has left Europe in a mood of disillusionment and despair which calls aloud for a new religion. Bolshevism has supplied that new religion.' That is just what John Reed and I felt. But Russell saw deeper; that the new religion would not, in the long run, liberate mankind. Indeed he writes: 'I am persuaded that those who stand out against it will be the bearers of the seeds of progress.'

Running through Russell's comments is the idea that the regime in Russia will become a monstrous, Napoleonic tyranny. This, of course, is exactly what happened under Stalin. But Russell does not see that this sort of phase has come in many revolutions in history but has passed into other, calmer, phases. In one passage he likens Bolshevism to Mohammedanism. Both are 'practical, social, unspiritual, concerned to win the empire of the world; Christianity and Buddhism are primarily personal religions with mystical doctrines and a life of contemplation'. Again, he likens the Bolsheviks to Cromwell's Ironsides, and the Puritans, and shows how they miss the kindliness and tolerance which followed the era of the Puritans in England after 1688. This, he thinks, is worth all the creeds in the world.

Like Wells and myself, Russell took the view that Russia might become increasingly an Asiatic power and that Bolshevism might spread

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readily into the East if the Western Powers continued their war of intervention and their blockade of Russia. But Russell seems to go further and to think that, in these circumstances, 'It is much to be feared that Communism will fade and they [the Bolsheviks] will increasingly resemble any other Asiatic government, for example, our own government in India'. On the other hand, he sees other possibilities. He is impressed with the Bolsheviks' capacity for 'successfully solving the problem of enlisting ability into the public service without permitting it to amass wealth as it does in the capitalist communities'. This makes him think that 'An amazing industrial development may take place making Russia a rival of the United States'. There is considerable foresight in this remark. Again like Wells, Russell thinks that Russia can only get out of her state of economic collapse if she receives aid from the Western countries. A continuance of the blockade would only force the Russians back on themselves and, with great suffering to the people, make them become self-supporting.

Russell also dealt in his book with the theory of the materialist conception of history. He says there are four basic instincts that govern human affairs, at least in politics: acquisitiveness, vanity, rivalry, and love of power. Only acquisitiveness is concerned with man's relations to his material environment. The other three concern his social relations. The fundamental error of Bolshevism and the Marxist interpretation of history is that it makes only one of these instincts, acquisitiveness, responsible for all that happens in human affairs. Though acquisitiveness characterised the capitalist form of society throughout the nineteenth century, rivalry and the love of power have been at least as potent. He thinks the price that mankind would have to pay for following the Bolshevik method too high and the achievement of ultimate happiness doubtful. This was how Russell the philosopher looked on the Russian Revolution in its early stages.

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TROTSKY ON STALIN'S RUSSIA

Siegfried Bahne

EVEN shortly before Lenin's death on 21 January 1924, the War Commissar L. D. Trotsky seemed to be the second most important man in the Soviet party and state leadership. In reality, however, this was no longer the case, for a group of old Bolsheviks under the leadership of the 'troika' of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin had already formed against Trotsky, who had only joined the Bolshevik party in 1917. The differences of opinion between Lenin and Trotsky in the years 1904 to 1917, and above all Trotsky's theory of 'permanent revolution', served as the theoretical basis for their attacks.

This theory, in the elaboration of which Alexander Parvus-Helphand and Rosa Luxemburg participated in 1905, took its starting point from Marx's and Engels' theses on the transition from the bourgeois to the socialist revolution. Observation of Russian social classes, and in particular of the revolution of 1905, had led Trotsky to the view that despite its weakness and backwardness in comparison with its counterpart in West and Central Europe, the Russian proletariat was already capable of a successful revolutionary initiative, but that there was an important limitation on its ability to maintain power once it had seized it: 'Without direct political aid from the European proletariat the working class of Russia will not be able to retain its power and to turn its temporary supremacy into a permanent socialist dictatorship.'[1] Trotsky certainly supported an alliance between the working class and peasantry in Russia, but in his opinion this could last only as long as the proletariat made no deep encroachments on bourgeois property relations; afterwards there would be 'hostile clashes' even with the broad mass of the peasantry. 'Left to its own resources, the Russian working class must necessarily be crushed the moment it loses the aid of the peasants. Nothing remains for it but to link the fate of its political supremacy with the fate of a socialist revolution in Europe', had appeared as early as 1906 in Trotsky's essay 'Prospects of a Labour Dictatorship', in which he made the first coherent exposition of his theory of permanent revolution.[2] Here it is unnecessary to examine in detail his further elaboration and modification of the theory,[3] or Lenin's attitude towards it and its simplified transformation into a weapon in the struggle against Trotsky and 'Trotskyism' after 1924 by Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin. However, without a knowledge of the main features of this theory neither Trotsky's political attitude after 1923–24 nor the arguments of his opponents are comprehensible.

1 L. Trotsky, *Our Revolution* (New York, 1918), p. 136.
2 Ibid. p. 144; cf. L. Trotsky, *Mein Leben* (Berlin, 1930), p. 172.
3 See, primarily, Trotsky's *Die Permanente Revolution* (Berlin, 1930).

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On the basis of the theory of permanent revolution Trotsky always emphasised the link between the fate of the isolated workers' state and the course of world history, and stressed that the fundamental contradiction between the Soviet Union and the capitalist world was insuperable, that one could only lengthen the interval of respite and win time until the international revolution, which could then 'take Russia in tow', came to the rescue. At the fourth congress of the Communist International in November 1922, Trotsky said that when Friedrich Engels spoke of the 'leap into the realm of freedom' he had meant by this 'leap' not a solitary short act, but a whole period.[4] In the meantime, according to Trotsky, who once defined Bolshevism as 'a system of revolutionary education for the proletariat's seizure of power', it was important to strengthen the proletarian dictatorship internally and support the revolutionary forces in the capitalist states.

ALTHOUGH the open struggle between the 'troika' and Trotsky broke out as early as the beginning of the 'literary discussion' in December 1923, and Trotsky's criticism of the increasing bureaucratisation of the Communist Party in his articles on the 'new course',[5] no serious differences of opinion between the two groups could yet be observed on the question of the outlook for the construction of socialism. Even in the spring of 1924, in the first edition of his book on Leninism, Stalin had still stressed internationalism and denied the possibility of constructing socialism in *one* country, and particularly in an agricultural country like Russia. In the autumn of 1924, however, Stalin proclaimed that it was possible to build socialism in one country; a comparison of the most important part in the two editions of this book by Stalin shows the change in his point of view, though it was still cautiously formulated.[6] At that time Stalin reproached Trotsky above all with being unable to give the Soviet Union any ray of hope if the international proletarian revolution were delayed. 'According to this plan our revolution is left with only one prospect: to go on vegetating in its own contradictions and, while waiting for the world revolution, to rot on the stalk.' And in fact Trotsky openly referred to the gloomy outlook for the Soviet Union if the appearance of the expected proletarian revolution in the developed industrial states was long delayed, first in his speech to the fourth Comintern congress (1922), then in more detail in his pamphlet *Capitalism or Socialism?*, which appeared in 1925. Here he admitted that if world capitalism, and particularly European capitalism, were to find a 'new dynamic balance . . . for its productive forces' it would mean

[4] Trotsky, *Geschichte der russischen Revolution*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1931), p. 438; *Die internationale Revolution und die Kommunistische Internationale* (Berlin, 1929), pp. 74, 126; *Protokoll des IV. Kongresses der K.I.* (Hamburg, 1923), p. 272.

[5] Trotsky's letter of 8 December in M. Eastman, *Since Lenin Died* (London, 1925), p. 145; Stalin's reply in *Werke*, vol. 5, p. 325; vol. 6, p. 12. Cf. I. Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed* (London, 1959), p. 119; Trotsky, *1917* and *Cours Nouveau*.

[6] Cf. Stalin, *Lenin und der Leninismus* (Vienna, 1924), p. 48; *Werke*, Vol. 6, p. 95; N. Bukharin, *Der Weg zum Sozialismus* (Vienna, 1925), p. 119.

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that it had 'still not exhausted its historical "mission"' and so 'we would have made a mistake in our fundamental historical judgments'. It was indisputable that in a backward country socialism was bound to be in a difficult position if capitalism in the advanced countries were still to undergo 'a development of the productive forces extending over many years'.[7] However, Trotsky held that such a possibility, which had no place in his theory of permanent revolution, was as good as excluded, provided that the dictatorship of the proletariat remained untouched, that the Leninist structure of the Bolshevik party was maintained, and that this party and the Communist International conducted a correct Marxist-Leninist policy.

These conditions for a successful revolutionary policy seemed to Trotsky to be increasingly endangered. As early as his first open attack after Lenin had been incapacitated, he had emphatically warned of the increasing 'bureaucratisation' of the party apparatus, which Lenin had already observed with anxiety and which was 'linked with a development of conservative traditionalism and all its side-effects'—a development condemned in a resolution of the central committee of 5 December 1923.[8] Trotsky admitted that socialist construction was possible in the Soviet Union. This depended, he held, in order of their importance on the following three factors: the degree of the development of the productive forces, the cultural level of the proletariat, and political victory in both the national and international spheres. The superiority of the socialist over the capitalist economic system must be demonstrated by higher labour productivity. In 1925 he wrote: 'We know the fundamental law of history: in the last resort victory will go to the regime which assures human society the higher economic level. The historical issue will be decided—*to be sure, not all at once*—by the relative co-efficients of labour productivity.'[9] In October 1929 (at the moment when the world economic crisis broke out), the great superiority over 'capitalist anarchy' of a centrally planned socialist economy, even with Stalin's policy, which in his opinion was faulty and time-wasting, seemed to him to be proved.[10] Thus in Trotsky's opinion the pursuit of a correct policy ensured the approach to socialism, but it was impossible to achieve complete socialism in isolation in one country. By contrast, Stalin announced as early as the summer of 1925 that the proletariat could and must, so far as it exercised leadership over the peasantry, build a socialist society in the

[7] Stalin, *Werke*, vol. 6, p. 329; Trotsky, *Kapitalismus oder Sozialismus?* (Berlin, 1925), p. 84; *Protokoll des IV. Kongresses der K.I.*, p. 289.

[8] *Internationale Presse-Korrespondenz*, IV, pp. 69, 80, 790; Trotsky, *Cours Nouveau*, p. 58; *1917*, pp. 16, 77; *Die wirkliche Lage in Russland*, p. 243.

[9] *Protokoll des IV. Kongresses*, pp. 271, 287; Trotsky, *Kapitalismus*, pp. 9, 12; *Wohin treibt England?* (Berlin, 1925), p. 30: 'The chief aim of socialism is directed to strengthening the economic forces of the people. Only on that foundation is it possible to build a more cultured, more harmonious, happier human society.'

[10] *Die Fahne des Kommunismus*, 1929, p. 310; cf. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed* (London, 1937), pp. 52, 80: 'Socialism has demonstrated its right to victory . . . not in the language of dialectics, but in the language of steel, cement, and electricity' (p. 16).

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country it ruled. At that time he presented the question as a simple alternative: either one regarded the Soviet Union as the basis of the proletarian revolution and capable of building a complete socialist society, or one did not regard it as the basis of the revolution and held it to be incapable of constructing socialism, and consequently resigned oneself to the degeneration of Soviet power and the CPSU.[11]

BY this time Trotsky was already as good as excluded from the struggle for the leadership of the Soviet state; on 17 January 1925 he was relieved of his duties as War Commissar. In an entry in his diary on 26 November 1926, Trotsky explained the success of his opponents: 'in history revolutions have always been followed by counter-revolutions'. This sequence of revolution and counter-revolution was 'the product of certain fundamental features in the mechanics of class society'. Every revolution presupposed the participation of the masses, but since in Russia these had now become tired and more sceptical about revolutionary slogans and efforts, the party bureaucracy led by Stalin could use even an element of 'tranquillity', of 'law and order', these 'semi-conservative' inclinations of a part of the working class and the party membership as a basis for its victory. In this situation and given the position of the peasants, who were certainly opposed to a bourgeois-capitalist restoration through fear that a return of the landowners would reopen the land question, yet wished just as little for an advance on the road to socialism, Trotsky saw danger points. He also reckoned with the possibility that the *kulaks* might turn against the revolution as allies of the 'Bonapartism' he feared.[12]

Between 1925 and 1928, when the party majority under Stalin's and Bukharin's leadership followed a course which was comparatively friendly to the peasants, this danger did not seem to him acute. Of more immediate interest were Stalin's struggle against the Left Opposition, led by Trotsky and Zinoviev and united since July 1926, in the CPSU, and the 'bolshevisation' of the other sections of the Comintern, which in this way were being progressively turned into tools of the only ruling communist party. The most important role in this dispute was played by Stalin's theory, which Trotsky described in 1926 as 'a sort of Monroe Doctrine for the construction of socialism in Russia', and which had been the official party line since the fourteenth CPSU conference in April 1925. At the last important public appearance of the opposition, at the seventh plenary session of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in November—December 1926, the final discussion between Stalin, Bukharin, and Rykov on one side, and Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev on the other, took place before a big party forum. The subject

11 Stalin, *Werke*, vol. 7, pp. 144, 158; vol. 9, p. 19; cf. Bukharin, *Weg zum Sozialismus*, p. 119.

12 *Worker's International News*, 1942, No. 7, p. 20; *Die Bücherschau* (Berlin, 1929), p. 296. *Cf. Le Contrat Social* (Paris), 1960, pp. 186–9, for the debate on Trotsky's attitude in 1925.

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was Stalin's 'national socialist' theory (as Trotsky then called it), one of whose assumptions was the absolute 'law' of the 'uneven economic and political development' of capitalism (Lenin). Briefly, Trotsky's main arguments in his unfinished speech were the dependence of the Russian, even the Soviet Russian, economy on the world economy, which just now, at the end of the period of reconstruction, was bound to become noticeable: 'The industrialisation of our country . . . means for the immediate and still fairly long future not the reduction, but on the contrary, the growth of our association with the rest of the world . . . with capitalism . . . and at the same time the intensification of the struggle against the international bourgeoisie.' That is, growing imports of machinery and exports of grain were the conditions for a rapid development of technology. By contrast, the acceptance of Stalin's doctrine would 'unavoidably mean an extraordinary reduction in the tempo of our economic development'; time was, however, a decisive factor, because the Soviet Union was not in fact alone in the world but was encircled by capitalist states. To abstract the question from these international connections was 'metaphysical rumination'. Of course the Soviet Union could 'successfully go on building socialism . . . and increasingly consolidate our country economically and politically in the socialist path', but it could arrive at socialism itself solely and exclusively through a proletarian world revolution.[13]

In subsequent years Trotsky continued to express the view that Stalin's 'national socialism' was a 'reactionary Utopia' and a 'consolation theory' for the people, that the attempt at *isolated* development meant allowing the productive forces to decline even in comparison with capitalism, and involved the necessity of conducting a policy of understanding with the foreign bourgeoisie in order to avoid and cut short any disturbances that might hamper the construction of socialism. Connected with this he also saw the danger that the relationship between the patriotism of the victorious Russian proletariat and the defeatism of the proletariat in the bourgeois countries would be broken, for if socialism could be realised on the national scale even in backward Russia, how much more so in the advanced countries: the consequence would be the disintegration of the Comintern along the line of 'social patriotism'.[14] Trotsky rejected the 'bolshevisation' of the Comintern sections, carried out partly in order to avoid this danger and to allow the best possible exploitation of the non-Russian parties for the support of Stalin and his disciples in the Comintern, as well as in the interest of maintaining peace for the Soviet Union.[15]

[13] *Protokoll des VII. EKKI-Plenum* (Hamburg, 1927), pp. 32, 587, 595, 600; Stalin, *Werke*, vol. 9, p. 102.

[14] Trotsky, *Die Permanente Revolution*, p. 6; *Die Internationale Revolution*, pp. 52, 63, 68, 72.

[15] Trotsky, *The Strategy of the World Revolution* (New York, 1930), p. 75.

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TILL now Trotsky had rejected a comparison between the decline of Jacobinism in the great French Revolution and the development of Bolshevism, a comparison which had already been drawn some time before by the 'ultra-left' communists, represented in the Soviet Union mainly by the group of 'democratic centralists' (*Detsists*) under the leadership of P. Zalutsky. While the latter already spoke of the 'post-Thermidor' phase in the Soviet Union, Trotsky still did not think Thermidor had begun, though he certainly considered that the danger of such a development existed. However, this did not prevent his opponents from accusing him of this heresy as early as 1926. Trotsky's attitude on the question of the 'Soviet Thermidor' changed after the suppression of the attempted opposition demonstration on 7 November 1927, the subsequent expulsion of the opposition leaders from the party, and his own banishment to Alma Ata in 1928. At that time Trotsky wrote: 'The immediate task which Stalin has set himself is to split the party, eliminate the opposition, accustom the party to the method of executions. . . . The worst elements, corrupted by power, and blinded by bureaucratic hate, are preparing with all their might for Thermidor, the day of the revolution's destruction.' All the same, he still believed that the main danger would come from the 'rightists', from Rykov, Kalinin, etc., who in his view had succumbed to the influence of the prosperous middle peasants, and also from trade union leaders like Tomsky, less from the 'centrist apparatus group' (Stalin, Molotov, Kaganovich, Mikoyan, Kirov; Trotsky still thought that Bukharin wavered between the two tendencies). Naturally he claimed that in contrast to them the Left Opposition he led embodied the revolutionary Leninist tradition.[16] In 1928 Trotsky considered the possibility of a transition in the Soviet Union to a counter-revolutionary military dictatorship supported by the *kulaks* as the 'modern variety of Bonapartism'. He connected this 'danger of Bonapartism', which exceptionally might arise without going through the Thermidor stage, not only with the names of Voroshilov and Budenny as possible leaders of such a dictatorship, but also with that of Stalin.[17]

Trotsky classified the rightist course steered by Stalin and Bukharin after 1925 as an 'attempt at a half-blind, purely empirical, and belated adaptation to the delay in revolutionary development', in which the leadership, without any 'synthesising understanding' of the inner tendencies of the present epoch, had orientated itself only according to feelings (Stalin), and had tried to fill out the fragmentary consequences with 'scholastic schemes' (Bukharin). For this reason their policy followed a zig-zag course. Trotsky dealt fully with the international consequences of this policy in his criticism of the draft programme of the Communist

[16] Trotsky, *Lage in Russland*, pp. 16, 103.

[17] Trotsky in *Bücherschau*, p. 297; Deutscher, op. cit., p. 458; B. Souvarine, *Staline* (Paris, 1935), p. 304; Stalin, *Werke*, vol. 10, p. 143: 'Bonapartism is the attempt to force the will of the minority on the majority.' Cf. also the explanation of Trotsky's attitude in 1923 in terms of the danger of a Bonapartist coup d'état in Loris' article in *Worker's International News*, 1942, No. 7, p. 6.

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International, worked out by a commission under the guidance of Bukharin and Stalin in 1927–28.[18]

The draft was adopted at the sixth Comintern congress (July–September 1928); but by this time the estrangement between Stalin and Bukharin and his allies was already far advanced, although this was not yet apparent on the surface. Since the fifteenth Party congress in December 1927, which had approved the excommunication of the most prominent Left leaders, Stalin had been aiming at a shift to the left in preparation for the introduction of rapid industrialisation and the collectivisation of agriculture, and had adopted many of the slogans of the Left Opposition. A *Pravda* leader of 15 February 1928 against the *kulaks* indicated that the decision had been taken. Trotsky thought that the danger threatening from the 'new bourgeoisie' had become so acute that the new course of Stalin and the ruling bureaucracy was dictated by the instinct of self-preservation. On another occasion he attributed the change of course more to the 'pressure of the proletariat'. However, Trotsky did not approve of the forced pace of industrialisation and collectivisation which were to precipitate the Soviet Union into a period of the greatest internal weakness.[19]

ALTHOUGH the right-wing leaders were removed from office after 1928–29 and an 'ultra-left' policy was carried out, there was no weakening of the struggle against 'Trotskyism', even though the Right thought Stalin was now not only carrying out a Trotskyite policy but was also preparing for an alliance with the Left; instead, Trotsky was banished from the Soviet Union in January 1929. After the beginning of the change of course he had thought there was still time to eliminate the elements of 'dual rule' appearing in the Soviet Union through reform; but for this a *real* change of course and the adoption of the Left Opposition's point of view were necessary. Trotsky still took the Right for the main enemy whose victory it was most important to prevent: 'After a victory of the Right wing it would be impossible to return to the dictatorship through a simple party reform. . . . [It] would be a temporarily masked victory of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat.' Rykov was openly preparing the surrender of the October Revolution to the hostile classes, while Bukharin lulled the consciousness of the party to sleep by his 'reactionary scholasticism', and Stalin moved from one foot to the

18 Trotsky, *Die Internationale Revolution*, passim; *The Third International After Lenin* (New York, 1936).

19 *Die Fahne des Kommunismus*, 1928, p. 456; Trotsky, *Stalin*, p. 504; *Probleme der Entwicklung der USSR* (Berlin, 1931), p. 5; Stalin, *Werke*, vol. 10, p. 235; *Internationale Presse-Korrespondenz*, 1928, p. 355; for Bukharin see: B. D. Wolfe, *Khrushchev and Stalin's Ghost* (New York, 1957), p. 235. 'The best and most advantageous tempos are those which not only yield the most rapid development of industry and collectivisation at the present moment, but which also ensure the necessary steadfastness of the social order, that is, ensure above all the consolidation of the alliance between the industrial workers and the peasants, which can alone make further successes possible' (Trotsky, *Die permanente Revolution*, p. 6).

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other.[20] But although he thought that the historical role of the Stalinist period consisted in the fact that by its policy power was sliding from the proletariat to the bourgeoisie, he did not exclude the possibility of a later alliance with a section of the Stalinists; at the moment, however, that was inopportune and impossible. For the moment the main thing was to exploit the struggle between the two other factions, which, however, could be used for a 'thorough party reform' only if the masses were involved. These would have to be organised in a Bolshevik way, and then, if it became necessary, they would have to go as far as a strike and support the slogan of the secret ballot. He called on the supporters of the opposition to be 'completely and totally impregnated with the consciousness of their supreme historical mission'.[21] Optimistically, he took his small opposition group for the 'yeast of the revolutionary future': 'Step by step we can create a base for ourselves, but only on the foundation of ideological influence. . . . Whether we will grow fast or slowly I don't know. That doesn't depend on us. But we will *inevitably* grow—with a correct policy'. This policy excluded violent measures, for in contrast with the 'ultra-leftists' he did still believe that an 'internal reform' of the Bolshevik party and the Soviet state was possible. He rejected both preparation for the formation of a new party and even more an armed struggle and revolution.

WHAT then was Trotsky's attitude to the 'Thermidor' question and hence to the judgment to be made of the Soviet state in the first years of his exile? During his dispute in the late summer of 1929 with Hugo Urbahns, the leader of the 'ultra-left' *Leninbund* and former comrade-in-arms of Ruth Fischer and Arkady Maslow, Trotsky set forth in detail his attitude on this question. In the process he defined 'Thermidor', in opposition to the view that it was a 'mere weakening of revolutionary positions', as 'the first victorious stage of the counter-revolution, that is the direct passage of power from one class to another', and which was only veiled by the fact that this struggle was carried out between the factions of the previously united revolutionary party. After referring to the influence of the defeat of the German communists in 1923 on subsequent developments, and to the historical differences between the conditions after the French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century and those after the Russian Revolution in 1917, he condemned the view that 'Thermidor' could triumph in the Soviet

20 *Fahne des Kommunismus*, 1928, pp. 379, 392, 447; Trotsky, *Mein Leben*, pp. 537–545; cf. V. Serge, *Vie et Mort de Trotsky* (Paris, 1951), p. 212.

21 'At the time that the open ballot was introduced, it was meant to ensure that the enemies of the proletarian dictatorship could not vote against it. Because of the element of dual power in the country, the workers could not vote for the dictatorship for fear of the pressure of the bourgeoisie.' And, claiming that the opposition was following the correct class line, Trotsky continued: 'The axis of our internal policy is to keep the power in the hands of the proletariat, or, rather, to return to the proletariat the power which the apparatus has usurped, and to consolidate further the proletarian dictatorship on the basis of a steady improvement in the material conditions of life of the working class. There is no other recipe, and none other is necessary' (*Fahne des Kommunismus*, 1929, pp. 1–5).

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Union without civil war as 'reformism in reverse'. It is true he did not take the 'Stalinist zig-zag to the left' as the sign of the end of the Thermidorian danger, but rather as a blow dealt at 'the Thermidorian class forces and the expression of their tendencies in the party'. For him the Stalinism of that time was a 'Kerensky period in reverse', that is, 'the last form of the rule of the proletariat' weakened by 'internal and external contradictions' and 'errors of the leadership', just as the Kerensky regime had been the last form of the rule of the bourgeoisie in Russia. In parrying ultra-left theories Trotsky pointed out that no government stands above classes, so that if it were maintained that Thermidor had taken place in the Soviet Union, this would mean that Russia was now once again a bourgeois state. In spite of the elements of dual power, the control of the most important means of production was still, now as before, in the hands of the workers' state and not of the bourgeoisie; and this was decisive.[22]

In the main Trotsky adhered to this view of the class character of the Soviet Union till the end of the Stalinist leftward swing in 1934–35. All the same he held that the ruling party bureaucracy was simultaneously a 'plebiscitary and distorted form of the dictatorship of the proletariat' *and* a potential 'tool of Bonapartism'. In the spring of 1931 he defined Bonapartism as 'one of the forms of the victory of the bourgeoisie over the revolution of the masses of the people', in fact as a 'more overt, "riper" form of the bourgeois counter-revolution' than the Thermidorian reversal. However, Thermidor and Bonapartism were not 'irreconcilable class types' but 'developmental stages of the same type'. The defeat of the Right had reduced the chances of the Thermidorian 'veiled' form of the counter-revolutionary transformation, but instead the simultaneous advance in the degeneration of the party apparatus had increased the chances of the Bonapartist form.[23]

Only a few months later, in an open letter to the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union after his banishment, he accused Stalin of exercising 'personal rule' and of having introduced the 'principle of a super-monarchical authority'. Stalin's strength had always been solely that he was 'the most complete embodiment of bureaucratic automatism'; separated from the apparatus he was 'nothing, an empty patch'. 'Stalin has led you into a blind alley', he wrote to the members of that leading Soviet body at this moment of the Soviet Union's greatest weakness: 'The Stalinist system is breaking down precisely in the way the opposition said it would'. It was time 'to liquidate the Staliniad'.[24] In January 1933 he gave the following appraisal of the successes and consequences of the first five-year plan. It was true the plan had brought enormous progress in the fields of technology and production, but

[22] Trotsky, *Die Verteidigung der Sowjetrepublik* (Berlin, 1929), pp. 17–30; *Mein Leben*, pp. 488, 537, 546; *Die Lage der Partei und die Aufgaben der linken Opposition* (Berlin, 1929).
[23] Trotsky, *Probleme der Entwicklung*, pp. 16, 20.
[24] Trotsky, *Offener Brief an das Zentralexekutivkomitee der Sowjetunion* (Vienna, 1932), pp. 9, 12.

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nevertheless this had not strengthened the dictatorship of the proletariat, but rather increased the danger of Thermidor. 'The petty-bourgeois counter-revolution, which sincerely considers itself to be a revolution, which does not want the rule of capitalism, but inevitably prepares it—that is Thermidor'. In the Soviet Union only the peasantry could become 'a force making for the Thermidor' and that would happen at the moment when it separated itself from the proletariat. It was true that the proletariat had become much stronger as a result of industrialisation, but it had been 'totally deprived of an active, vigilant party capable of action'; the still existing 'semblance of a party' which in reality united 'the terrorised elements of two parties: that of the proletariat and that of Thermidor' did not have a Marxist leadership. On the other hand the peasantry, forced into *kolkhozes*, had been given in them 'an organisation for resistance to the Soviet state'. Since, moreover, in the last few years the Comintern had met with nothing but defeats, the dictatorship had moved even closer to Thermidor as a result of the bad internal Soviet and international situations.[25]

IN the international sphere Trotsky had always regarded Germany as a sort of key to Europe; for this reason he directed his main interest after Russia to that country, particularly after his banishment from the Soviet Union (1929). He called the history of the German workers' movement after 1914 'the most tragic chapter of modern history'. After 1930 he had tried to warn the German proletariat of the threatening catastrophe, but without any success. At the beginning of 1933, directly after Hitler's nomination as Chancellor—for which he held that the 'chain of crimes', as he characterised the policy of the 'Stalinist bureaucracy' in Germany, bore considerable responsibility—Trotsky again gave warning of the consequences for the Soviet Union and the Comintern of a final victory for Hitler. Earlier he had prophesied that a fascist victory in Germany would 'at least half involve the collapse of the Soviet Republic'.[26]

At the end of August 1933 a conference of independent socialist and communist parties—among Trotskyites there was talk of a 'new Zimmerwald'—had decided to found a new 'Fourth International'; Trotsky and his followers came out in support of this proposal, although as late as April 1933 Trotsky had spoken against the immediate foundation of a new International.[27] In the autumn he once again explained in detail his views on the class character of the Soviet state in his important pamphlet, *The Soviet Union and the Fourth International*. They can be summarised as follows: As property relations had not changed, the proletariat was still the ruling class in the Soviet Union; it tolerated the hated rule of the 'irresponsible bureaucracy' out of fear that the

25 Trotsky regarded the 'national messianism' that was beginning to appear in the thirties as a logical outcome of Stalin's theory.
26 Trotsky, *Ecrits 1928–40*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1959), p. 100.
27 *Unser Wort* (Prague-Paris, 1933), Nos. 4, 11; *La Verité* (Paris), Nos. 154, 202.

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class enemy might exploit any action directed against this bureaucracy. To classify the rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy as 'Bonapartism' was incorrect, for Bonapartism could not exist without the social basis of bourgeois property. 'Bonapartism is only one of the varieties of capitalist hegemony.' By contrast the 'Bonapartism of Soviet bureaucracy' had 'under it the soil of a Soviet regime'. The bureaucracy was not a class and not even a 'ruling class' but was, like every bureaucracy, the servant of a class (in this case a bad servant of the proletariat which was usurping the functions of ruling, a 'tumour' which could never become an independent organism). The present Soviet regime was 'not socialist, but transitional', burdened with capitalistic remnants, such as social inequality in particular. The 'Stalinist apparatus' was 'centrist' because it was fulfilling a double role; that is, on one side it was defending the proletarian dictatorship with bad methods, while on the other, precisely because of this, it was easing the future victory of the enemy. The decisive struggle would take place, without the bureaucracy playing an independent part, between the proletariat and the active forces of the counter-revolution. The preliminary condition for a thorough reform of the Soviet state was a victorious world revolution. The 'Bolshevik-Leninists' (as the Trotskyites were officially called) formed the core of a new Bolshevik party which reckoned with the 'tragic possibility' of the downfall of the first workers' state but must nonetheless defend this disintegrating Soviet state to the end.

Let us take this summary of Trotsky's standpoint in the autumn of 1933 as the basis for a closer examination of the further development of his attitude towards the Soviet Union in the following years. At the end of 1934, directly after Kirov's assassination, he still held in essentials to this position, but thought that national conservatism, a privileged caste spirit, and acquisitive instincts were increasingly paralysing the progressive work of the bureaucracy, that is, the defence of the new order established by the October Revolution. The Stalinist faction was constantly raising itself further above the party and even above the bureaucracy, was openly proclaiming the purely Bonapartist principle of the leader's infallibility, a repulsive cult of the leader, and individual terrorism, which was based on mistrust of the masses. The bureaucracy was putting up a desperate resistance to the progressive needs of the new society, which by now had reached a stage in economic and cultural development which demanded the restoration of Soviet democracy. In this context Trotsky reckoned with the inevitable disintegration of the bureaucracy's domination.[28]

Trotsky sharply rejected the swing to the right embodied in the 'popular-front tactics' introduced in 1934–35. Before and after the seventh Comintern Congress in the summer of 1935,[29] and the two trials

[28] Trotsky, *La Bureaucratie Stalinienne et l'Assassinat de Kirov* (Paris, 1935), pp. 8, 13, 19.

[29] Trotsky's attitude can be found in *Unser Wort*, III, No. 10. He condemned the popular-front tactics as 'the denial of the law of class struggle' (*Der einzige Weg*, p. 29).

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of Zinoviev and Kamenev, Trotsky partially revised his theories. In doing so he tried to give greater clarity to the concepts of 'Thermidor' and 'Bonapartism'. As he admitted, the Thermidor analogy had obscured rather than illuminated the problem. Both Thermidor and Bonaparte's *coup d'état* of the 18th Brumaire had been acts of the reaction on the social basis of the revolution, without a restoration of the pre-revolutionary property and power relationships. Soviet bureaucratism, the product of social contradictions, regulated these contradictions by raising itself above the working masses; in it a special 'commanding order' had developed. But the proletarian dictatorship survived, admittedly in a distorted form, in the 'dictatorship of the bureaucracy'. Just as the more conservative Jacobins had taken over power on the 9th Thermidor, so the more conservative elements of the bureaucracy and the workers' aristocracy had supplanted the revolutionary *avant-garde* in the Thermidorian process in the Soviet Union after 1924. By now Trotsky, like the ultra-left communists earlier, thought that Thermidor had already taken place about 1925–26. The present political regime of the Soviet Union was extraordinarily reminiscent of that of the First Consul towards the end of the Consulate. 'To the extent that the bureaucracy becomes more independent and power is increasingly concentrated in the hands of one single person, *bureaucratic centralism* is further transformed into *Bonapartism*'. Trotsky compared this 'Soviet Bonapartism' with bourgeois Bonapartism in its ascent (Napoleon I), not in its decline (Napoleon III); it was consolidating the workers' and peasants' revolution 'through the destruction of its international programme, its leading party, its Soviets', as well as through the creation of a 'new aristocracy'. As Bonapartism could not last long, but must indeed inevitably collapse, the fate of Soviet socialism depended on the character of the political regime which would follow. The opposition could seize power and cauterise the 'remaining wounds of bureaucratism' only with the support of the proletarian world revolution. However, it was a fact that the 'progressive reforms of the bureaucracy' (meaning above all industrialisation and collectivisation) had only taken place 'under the knout of the opposition'. Thus the Leninist opposition had saved the Soviet regime from complete collapse.[30]

ON the eve of the great purge a new constitution for the Soviet Union was prepared. At that time, in his interview with Roy Howard (on 1 March 1936), Stalin characterised the view that the Bolsheviks had ever aimed at a world revolution as false and a 'tragi-comic

30 Trotsky, *Arbeiterstaat, Thermidor, und Bonapartismus* (Paris, 1936), *passim*. 'By Bonapartism we mean a regime in which the economically dominant class, no longer able to rule by democratic means, finds itself compelled, in order to preserve its property, to put up with the rule of the military and police apparatus, headed by a "saviour" . . . [In Soviet Bonapartism] the objective function of the "saviour" is to protect the new forms of property by usurping the political functions of the ruling class. Is not this exact description of the Stalin regime at the same time the scientific sociological definition of Bonapartism?' (p. 20).

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misunderstanding'. He maintained that the 'socialist organisation' of the Soviet Union could, it was true, not yet be 'characterised as completely constructed, but as a social organisation whose core was socialist'. Trotsky called this 'lies, lies and lies again' in his criticism of the interview and the draft constitution, in so far as its basic features were known in the spring of 1936. He remarked that according to 'Marxist logic' the claimed abolition of classes must mean that the social basis for the proletarian dictatorship had also disappeared, because then 'the dissolution of the dictatorship into socialist society and thus the liquidation of the state' must begin. Behind these and other false statements of Stalin's (for instance, that there was a party corresponding to every class) stood the fact that in reality what interested him was not Marxist sociology but the monopoly position of the bureaucracy: 'The party now ruling in the Soviet Union is nothing but the political machine of the privileged class'. The bureaucracy would use every means in the attempt to maintain its present position. In this situation terrorism was the 'tragic pendant' of Bonapartism; the bureaucracy as such profited from the terror although every individual bureaucrat feared it. In opposition to the assertion that socialism had been achieved in the Soviet Union, what had in fact happened, since the introduction of the NEP, was that the bureaucracy as a 'social category' had regulated social contradictions in the interest of the 'privileged classes or strata', for which it collected heavy tribute from the workers. One of the main reasons for changing the constitution was the fact that on occasion Stalin had to look in the lowest classes of the population for support against the highest; another was that in spite of collectivisation the material and cultural differences between town and country in essentials still existed: 'Bonapartism always relies on . . . the village against the town. In this, too, Stalin is remaining within the tradition'. Soviet Bonapartism behaved towards Soviet democracy as bourgeois Bonapartism or even fascism to bourgeois democracy. The significance of the new constitution was that it was supposed to give legal sanction to the 'liquidation of the now dilapidated Soviet regime' and replace it with 'Bonapartism on a plebiscitary basis'.[81]

The '*Yezhovshchina*', the great wave of purges of the years 1936 to 1938, was for Trotsky a confirmation of his analysis of the Soviet Russian process of 'degeneration'. He believed that deep social causes lay behind the Moscow trials of Zinoviev and Kamenev (August 1936), and Radek, Pyatakov and Sokolnikov (January 1937). The 'new aristocracy' of the Soviet Union, whose rule was based on deception of the masses, feared both criticism and the people, not least because it was the embodiment of a monstrous inequality and had to hide the truth. 'The whole

[81] *Die Rundschau* (Basel), V, pp. 410, 1093, 2117; Trotsky, *De nieuwe Grondwet van de Sowjet Unie* (Amersterdam, 1936), pp. 5, 9, 11. 'When the *Kulak*, now strengthened, began to move against the bureaucracy itself, the latter was compelled in self-defence to seek support among the lowest strata. In the years of struggle against the *kulaks* (1939–32), the bureaucracy was at its weakest. That was why it put such zeal into creating a labour and kolkhoz aristocracy.'

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policy of the new aristocracy is a frame-up. The new constitution is a frame-up'. In his systematic struggle against the opposition Stalin was repeating, even in details (e.g., the accusation of treachery), the Thermidorian methods against the Jacobins. As the contrast between the privileged bureaucracy and the people had widened into an 'abyss', the 'transition to the complete Thermidorian stage through the extirpation of the last remnants of the revolutionary spirit and of the least manifestation of the political independance of the masses' had become essential. As a result of this development, Stalinism had become 'the scourge of the Soviet Union and the plague of the international workers' movement', and it had dealt socialism deadlier blows than Hitler, because unlike the latter it had attacked it *from within* and prostituted it. But if Stalin had temporarily consolidated his power he was now near the end of his 'tragic mission', for the bloody purges had loosened the social and political foundations of Soviet Bonapartism: 'An open revolutionary conflict between the people and the new despotism is inevitable. Stalin's regime is doomed. Will the capitalist counter-revolution or workers' democracy replace it? History has not yet decided this question. The decision depends also upon the activity of the world proletariat'.[32]

SINCE Trotsky put this question (9 February 1937) twenty-five years have passed; neither of the possibilities he considered has been realised, at any rate not in the way he meant. In 1936 Trotsky himself set out the standpoint he had then reached in his criticism of Stalin's post-revolutionary Russia in the famous book *The Revolution Betrayed*; for anyone who knows his shorter pamphlets and articles on the subject it offers little that is new, and it may therefore be useful in conclusion to deal briefly with a few fundamental questions.

From what principles did Trotsky set out? Although he himself thought that life had driven rationalism out of him and taught him dialectics, in fact he remained to the end an optimistic rationalist. He had an unshakable belief in history, or more precisely in the teleological development of history ('inevitable' was one of his favourite words!), in the sense given it by Marxism defined as the 'conscious expression of the unconscious historical process'. Trotsky thought that with the help of Marxism the future could be foreseen better than with any other theory.[33] This characteristic remark dates from as early as 1907: 'History is a tremendous mechanism serving our ideals. Its work is slow, barbarously slow, implacably cruel, yet the work goes on. We believe in it'. On this point he never changed. As late as his testament of 27 February–3 March 1940, he remarked that his belief in the

[32] Trotsky, *I Stake my Life* (New York, 1937), p. 21; *Stalins Verbrechen* (Zürich, 1937), p. 366. Cf. Stalin's speeches in *Rundschau*, VI, pp. 525, 593.

[33] Trotsky, *Mein Leben*, pp. 87, 320; *The Living Thoughts of Karl Marx* (London, 1940), p. 2.

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communist future of humanity was even firmer than in his youth.[34] And about this communist future and the 'new men' who were to live in it he entertained the most optimistic ideas. In 1923 he wrote: 'Man will . . . create a higher social biological type, or . . . a superman . . .The average human type will rise to the heights of an Aristotle, a Goethe, or a Marx. And above this ridge new peaks will rise'.[35] This special type of faith was linked in Trotsky, with his thoroughly intellectual character, to a strong bias towards theoretical ways of seeing things, to logic and consistency which was so strong that to him even the contradictory nature of capitalism was in itself hateful, just as was Stalin's empiricism.

To Trotsky politics was 'concentrated economics'; to be sure, politics as a historical factor always followed economic developments after a time-lag. Since as a Marxist he believed he knew the goal of historical development, which was to bring about the classless communist society in which men could live together in real equality 'as members of a united human community', he held that all measures furthering the attainment of this goal were justified, even revolutionary terror: 'To make the individual holy, the social order which nails him to the cross must be abolished. However, this task can only be realised through blood and iron'.[36] All forces which, consciously or unconsciously, stood in the way of and hindered the fulfilment of this historical task, whether they were bourgeois-capitalist, reformist or finally the Stalinist 'grave-diggers of Bolshevism', were to be fought with the means which at the given moment promised success (including temporary tactical alliances).

Trotsky claimed that only Trotskyism expressed the 'real international revolutionary content of Leninism' and that it alone was the logical continuation and development of Lenin's theoretical and strategic principles. In his enumeration of the 'enrichments' of Marxist theories made by Bolshevism (which for Trotsky meant Leninism *and* 'new' Trotskyism), the Leninist theories on the party appear side by side with Trotsky's analyses of Bonapartism and the degeneration of the Bolshevik party.[37] At the beginning of his political career Trotsky had vigorously criticised Lenin's conception of the party of 'proletarian Jacobinism' in his pamphlet *Our Political Tasks* which appeared in August 1904.[38] As he had later completely accepted Lenin's theory of the party, he could not go back to this earlier criticism in his analyses of Soviet Russian

[34] Trotsky, *Our Revolution*, p. 168; *Trotsky's Diary in Exile* (Harvard, 1958). 'This faith in man and in his future gives me even now such power of resistance as cannot be given by any religion' (p. 166).

[35] Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* (New York, 1957), p. 255.

[36] Trotsky, *Die Internationale Revolution*, p. 78; *Lage in Russland*, p. 284; *Die Grundfragen der Revolution* (Hamburg, 1923), p. 70; cf. *Mein Leben*, p. 474, and *Stalinism*, p. 24, for the connection between political morality and historical mission.

[37] Trotsky, *Die Internationale Revolution*, p. 149; *Stalinism*, p. 28.

[38] Trotsky, *Nashi politicheskie zadachi* (Geneva, 1904), and Lenin, *What is to be done?* and *One step forward, two steps back*. Comparisons with the French revolution are to be found as early as 1903 in the debates of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party.

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developments, although in many points it was retrospectively confirmed. As far as Trotsky's Thermidor and Bonapartism theories and his predilection for the premature proclamation of sociological and historical 'laws' and analogies are concerned, these have been frequently, and in the main pertinently, criticised.[39] It is a contradiction to speak at one and the same time of development determined by laws and of 'treachery'. In fact the most important analogy between the 'Bonapartism' of Napoleon I and that of Stalin lies in the fact that in both cases the preceding revolution was 'neutralised', using the word in its Hegelian sense. Starting from Marxist premisses, Trotsky tried to 'capture' theoretically real historical developments even where they seemed to contradict Marxist and Leninist theories, and in this way to maintain the claim that theory had 'precedence'. Stalin also saw himself faced with this task, but as an unscrupulous empiricist uninterested in theory he solved it in the main simply by means of a subsequent adaptation of theory to what seemed to him the practical needs of the moment. In contrast to his rival, Trotsky produced many valuable individual analyses and in the sphere of practical politics he often—not always—saw more clearly and correctly than the official communist leadership, and yet, as a prisoner of his own ideology, he was not able to see developments falling outside the ideological schema for what they were. For instance the fact, which developments in the Soviet Union were not the last to make clear, that control over the means of production can be more important than ownership, and that the extent to which, and the persons in whom economic, political, and moral power are concentrated are important.

In his letter of 23 April 1885 to Vera Zasulich, Friedrich Engels wrote: 'People who boast that they *made* a revolution always see the day after that they had no idea what they were doing, that the revolution *made* does not in the least resemble the one they would like to make. That is what Hegel calls the irony of history, an irony which few historical personalities escape'.[40] Engels gave as examples Bismarck and Gladstone, but his remark also applies to Trotsky and the other Bolshevik leaders of the October Revolution, although they saw and admitted this either only many years later or not at all.

[39] Cf. L. Gottschalk in *The American Journal of Sociology*, 1938, p. 339; R. D. Warth in the *Journal of Modern History*, 1948, p. 27.
[40] Marx-Engels, *Selected Correspondence* (Moscow, 1956), p. 460.

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American Writers in Russia

THE THREE FACES OF LENIN

Daniel Aaron

THE introductory poem in H. H. Lewis's volume of poems, *Thinking of Russia* (1932), opens with the lines:

I'm always thinking of Russia,
I can't keep her out of my head,
I don't give a damn for Uncle Sham,
I am a left-wing radical Red.

Lewis, a revolutionary Missouri farmhand and author of a crude but expressive doggerel he called 'Bumthoughts' or 'Bolshegrams', was only one of the more colourful American proletarian poets for whom Russia in the thirties was an ideal—almost an incantation:

Russia, Russia, righting wrong
Russia, Russia, Russia!
That unified one sovereign throng
That hundred and sixty million strong
Russia!
America's loud Example-Song,
Russia, Russia, Russia.[1]

For the past fifteen years, a handful of American radical bards had been celebrating the USSR and its leaders in ecstatic if uneven verse. Hymns to peasants, Moscow, the Red Army, Lenin, Trotsky, Karl Radek, and Sen Katayama, and rhymed protestations of loyalty to the Russian proletariat regularly appeared in the pro-Bolshevik press. But with the advent of the Great Depression, a good many American writers and intellectuals, hitherto uninterested in the Soviet experiment or at best mildly curious about 'one sixth of the globe', turned their minds eastward and sometimes travelled in that direction. If they did not exult in socialist reconstruction so buoyantly as H. H. Lewis, they nonetheless began to think that perhaps the heirs of Lenin might have discovered a radical cure for an economically and spiritually sick society. No longer satisfied with the tenuous impressions of Russia obtained from Russian literature and music, they were now ready to tap the

1 Here the repetition of the word 'Russia', as William Carlos Williams noted in *The New Masses*, could be likened to Louis Aragon's onomatopoetic use of the letters 'S.S.S.R.' in his poem, 'Le Front Rouge' 'It goes to his head, as he says repeatedly, it maddens him with hope, with conviction, with certainty, with belief, the belief that sets him singing. His songs are songs, as good as he can make them, of triumph, realization. A poet's view of a real future.' Aragon's poem was translated brilliantly, although reluctantly, by his friend E. E. Cummings during his visit to the USSR in 1931. See *The Red Front* (Contempo Publishers, Chapel Hill, N.C., 1933).

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almost inexhaustible sources of information and misinformation that had been accumulating without let-up since the 1917 revolution.

From this stream of essays, memoirs, exposés, diaries, economic analyses, political treatises, and cultural surveys, the inquirer could learn that revolutions do much harm materially, socially, and spiritually—and much good; that the Bolsheviks were the architects of a viable socialism or its grave-diggers; that the Soviets had been compelled to change their policies in order to win over the peasants; that Russia was moving towards capitalism; that Bolshevism was a semi-Asiatic autocracy; that the habit of autocracy in Russia was not Bolshevik at all but Russian and that Russian socialism provided the world with the only escape from capitalist wars; that Russian communism was 'still a constructive political and economic experiment, but not what you would call revolutionary'; that Soviet Russia sought to emulate the worst features of western society—its industry, its soulless mechanism—and was simply the reverse side of Babbitt America; and that Bolsheviks were fated

> to be a tonic-purgative for an over-sophisticated, cynical, senescent, cunningly complicated world of individualistic enterprise, a world which long since solved the problem of adequately producing wealth, but falters at the task of finding satisfactory methods for controlling and justly equalising its distribution.[2]

In general, the vociferous but hardly influential literary partisans of the Russian experiment before the thirties belonged to the corps of political and intellectual rebels who had come of age during the two administrations of Woodrow Wilson. John Reed, author of *Ten Days That Shook the World* and already by the early twenties a minor saint in the Soviet pantheon, was the most celebrated member of this group, but its programme had been energetically pressed by such radicals as Max Eastman, Floyd Dell, Joseph Freeman, Michael Gold, V. F. Calverton and others in the columns of the left-wing magazines. All but Dell had spent some time in the USSR before 1930; each had done his best to refute the canards of the Philistines (for whom the Soviet Union was a hideous amalgam of anarchism, free-love, atheism, and despotism, worse, said the venerable labour leader, Samuel Gompers, than 'the most unwashed and freakish' bohemianism of Greenwich Village), and to persuade the a-political avantgardists and expatriates that here was a society from which there was no need to alienate themselves.

THE left intelligentsia made little impression on the American reading public who held to their image of 'Red Rooshia' as a horde of boors ruled by licentious bomb-throwing scoundrels. By the late twenties, however, they had made considerable headway with intellectuals depressed by their own institutions and culture and receptive to reports of artistic experimentation in the USSR. A dearth of translations of

[2] *The Dial*, LXXXV (1928), 245.

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Soviet plays, poems, and fiction prevented much first-hand acquaintance with Soviet accomplishments, but between 1928 and 1930 a number of recent Soviet works appeared in English together with articles and books on the Russian theatre. Even so, as late as 1930 no survey of Soviet art and literature existed in English, a gap that was only partially filled by *Voices of October* (1930),[3] a pioneer study by Joseph Freeman, Joshua Kunitz, and Louis Lozowick.

Had American writers taken the time to sample the literature, pro and con, about Soviet society, and had they been living in a period conducive to detached assessment, something approximating to a balanced view of the noble/barbarous Russian state might have emerged. What hampered any judicious appraisal before 1930 and after were the dark associations engendered by the very words 'Russia' and 'Communism' and the deeply engrained prejudices of those who elected to attack or defend them. Many Soviet apologists, for example, were first or second generation Eastern European Jews. They or their parents had carried to America memories of savage pogroms and an understandable hatred of Tsarist oppression. Thus when Maurice Hindus, himself a Jew born in a Ukrainian village, returned to his birthplace in a Chekhovian mood and in his book, *Red Bread* (1931), referred sympathetically to a little priest he talked to there, Michael Gold sardonically commented: 'This little priest may have wielded an axe in chopping off Jewish heads in pogroms, or he may have been a glutton, a drunkard and Tsarist spy.'[4]

Most American radicals were likely either to approach Russia through a Dostoevskian fog or to contrast Old Russia—backward, primitive, a land of besotted serfs, secret police, and Siberian penal colonies—with the New Russia crowded with clean-cut, undrunken, literate proletarians and rosy-cheeked *kolkhozniki*. The New Russians could be seen framed in the pages of *USSR in Construction*, happily driving home-made tractors, attending operas, and parading through the Red Square in gym suits. Even the street workers, according to one American poet, laboured happily to the tune of an inner music:

> *The workers here spill onward at their own sweet rate and*
> *Their rhythm is confident and the tune of their feet temperate:*
> *Daily out in the street the river of them moves abreast to lathes,*
> *To shops and furrows, each unit lifting a red flag like a sail:*
> *Also the poised river flows two ways around an island of street repairs*
> *Where muscles already move well,*
> *Shovels slamming the soil to finish the job by nightfall.*[5]

[3] Particularly valuable sections in this book are Kunitz's 'Men and Women in Soviet Literature' based on a first-hand knowledge of Soviet poetry and fiction and illustrated by many quotations, and Joseph Freeman's essay on the Russian film. The parts dealing with music and the arts are sketchy, but *Voices of October* is probably the last book written by Americans close to the party which contains a sympathetic account of the Russian Constructivists, Futurists, and Suprematists.

[4] *The New Republic*, LXVII (7 Oct., 1931), 211.

[5] Charles B. Strauss, 'Moscow Street', *The New Masses*, XIV (8 Jan., 1935), 15.

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Most of the American literary visitors to Russia lacked the knowledge and the background to determine whether the attitudes and behaviour they praised or blamed were the fruits of Bolshevism or merely evidence of persisting national traits. Like all travellers, they transported their preconceptions with their luggage. Russia was a new world for them, a world whose bizarre geography they had conned from obsolete texts or unreliable promotional tracts, but it was also a mirror which reflected their own hopes and anxieties. For many of them, Russia was a way-station in their spiritual itinerary, as England, France, Italy, and Germany had been for their nineteenth century counterparts. Unlike their predecessors, however, a good many of the literary voyagers of the thirties were leaving an America that seemed to have lost its confidence and drive. The new communist society served as a gauge to measure the strengths and weaknesses of their faltering though still powerful country.

Of the score or more American writers who travelled to Russia between 1920 and 1940,[6] three are of particular interest not only because they were and are of major importance in contemporary American literary history, but also because each represented a philosophy, an aesthetic, a kind of political and intellectual stance shared by others of their generation. One was anti-communist and aggressively non-political; two were fellow-travellers at the time and predisposed to favour the Soviet regime. Each wrote an account of his experiences, but although their trips took place within a space of five years and although they saw many of the same sights and passed through the same regions, their accounts could not possibly be more unlike.

E. E. CUMMINGS, self-defined '*peesahtel y hoodozhnik*', left Paris for the USSR in the spring of 1931 and spent about a month in what was for him a vast and dreary 'Enormous Room'. He stayed in Moscow most of the time, but he had one night in Kiev and a week in Odessa before he 'escaped' via a Soviet steamer to Constantinople and thence to blissful Paris. Cummings did not come to Russia as a member of any delegation nor did he choose to join any tourist party. He had no interest in 'economic or sociological problems', nor did he want to go to Russia as a writer or a painter: 'No', he told an official at the Soviet Embassy in Paris, 'I wish to go as myself'.

And (on the strength of a supporting letter from his friend, John Dos Passos) that is the way he went, although he found a number of uncongenial and genial escorts to guide him on his visits to theatres, circuses, museums, pubs, night clubs, and social gatherings. Factories, collective farms, reformatories for prostitutes, prophylactic stations,

[6] In addition to those already mentioned, these included Lincoln Steffens, Theodore Dreiser, John Dos Passos, Sinclair Lewis, Joseph Wood Krutch, Babette Deutsch, Anna Louise Strong, Claude McKay, Josephine Herbst, Matthew Josephson, Maurice Hindus, Isidor Schneider, Scott Nearing, W. H. Chamberlain, Dorothy Thompson, and many others.

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divorce courts (the usual highpoints for touring Americans) Cummings ignored. He did inspect a model jail, talk to Russian writers, and take in the 'casual filth' and 'aimless commotion' of the Soviet capital. What made his trip bearable were the accidental as well as the sought-for meetings with the dissidents, native and foreign: impoverished gentry precariously surviving in the New Russia, cynical American correspondents, shady entrepreneurs. Interviewed in Paris on his return, Cummings said the Russians were a 'marvellous people', but it was 'silly to rave about Russia if you don't know anything about it'. He scornfully dismissed the 'generalisers' who spouted platitudes and announced he was planning to publish his travel notes which he had smuggled out of the country.[7]

Two years later, *Eimi*, erroneously advertised as a novel, made a brief appearance and then vanished from the literary scene. Cummings wrote later that his 'diary of a pilgrimage to Marxist Russia was dutifully damned by America's fellow-travelling literary gangsters', and it is certainly true that the tone and content of his travelogue went against the current pro-Soviet mood. But the failure of this extraordinary work could be explained as much or more by its portmanteau words, fractured syntax, and Cummingsesque typography as by its anti-Soviet bias. Marianne Moore called *Eimi* a 'large poem' composed in the author's 'mental handwriting',[8] and even Ezra Pound, no foe of verbal experimentation, observed in a congratulatory letter to Cummings that 'the longer a work is (*Eimi* was 432 pages) the more and longer should be the passages that are perfectly clear and simple to read'. Pound complained that he 'found it difficult to read the stuff consecutively'.[9] If Cummings had written his tragi-comic vision of the totalitarian *Inferno* in straightforward prose, it very likely would have received a more sympathetic hearing.

Before his voyage into the dehumanised land of 'was', a friend in Paris had warned him not to be duped by the Potemkin villages and to keep his eye cocked for the 'Gay Pay Oo'. From the moment he crossed the Polish border, Comrade 'Kem-min-kz' (as the Russians called him) began to record his impressions of that 'joyless experiment in force and fear', the Soviet state. Not merely the discomforts, graphically recounted, disturbed him, the long waits, the bad beer, the ugly non-men and non-women, the propaganda, the inefficiency, the 'unmitigated dullness' of the theatre, the 'exjailbirds' and 'shysters' who ran the country. More dreadful were the sombre crowds mindlessly floating through the parks of culture and rest and the systematic quenching of joy:

> . . . that's, comrade Kem-min-kz exploded, 'what's lousy here! Trying! everybody's never feeling; never for a moment relaxing,

[7] See Charles Norman, *The Magic Maker. E. E. Cummings* (N.Y., Macmillan Co., 1958), p. 277ff.

[8] *Poetry*, August 1933, 278.

[9] *The Magic Maker*, pp. 299–300.

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> laughing, wondering—everybody's solemnly forever focusing upon some laughless idiotic unwonderful materially non-existent impermanence, which everybody apparently has been rabotatically instructed tovarich to welcome. God damn undream! May the handshaking hell of the Elks and morons bugger to a bloody frazzle everybody who spends his nonlife trying to isn't.'

As a latter-day transcendental-anarchist, Cummings did not oppose revolution but 'what has been miscalled the Russian revolution'. An idea is revolutionary, he has one of his spokesmen say, only when it springs from the instincts, when it liberates. 'What is an idea? Idayn, a pattern. Superficial because incited. Instinct: the fundamental, the what you call Is; the inciting power, the instigating force'. By this criterion, the only living things he found in Russia were some canvases by Picasso and Matisse in a Moscow museum and the few real alive men and women he occasionally encountered in the 'indissoluble promiscuity' of the USSR.

Eimi has been read as a kind of dream voyage into an inferno, and indeed the Dantean parallels are undisguisedly suggested at almost every point. K (Kem-min-kz, Cummings, Kafkian Everyman) passes through the infernal portal replete with smells at the Polish border and is guided by his Virgil (Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, grandson of the poet and an enthusiast for everything Russian) through what is ostensibly heaven but is actually the lower levels of hell. Cummings' Beatrice (reincarnated as Jack London's daughter) usurps Virgil's place as K moves among the hopeless spectres and monstrous fabrications of the socialist state. 'Factoryfodder all', he calls them, 'all machines' meat, efficiently disporting itselfless necessarily itselfless seeking automatically finding itselfless. Directed flesh, managed vitality, conditioned purpose'. Leaving the hell of Moscow for the Purgatory of Kiev and Odessa, he at last sails to Paradise and to liberty in his communist ghost ship.

Cummings' friendly and unfriendly left critics tended to regard his effort 'to high hat an entire social system' with a certain indulgence and explained his distorted image of Russia as the self-portrait of a talented anachronism. Cummings, they decided, was a vestige of a defunct lyric-Bohemia, a poet whose audience had outgrown him and who was as hostile to socialism as he was to One Hundred Per Cent Americanism. He was kin (to quote D. S. Mirsky's description of another American square peg, John Gould Fletcher) 'with thousands of European intellectuals who wish to preserve the individualism that was allowed them by the liberal and competitive Capitalism of the nineteenth century, and who are equally afraid of the juggernaut of monopolistic Capitalism and the hammer and sickle of Communism'.[10]

The Marxist explanation, however, missed the real significance of Cummings' undivine comedy. *Eimi* was not the book of a frightened or a desperate man. For all its self-indulgence, perverseness, and egocentricity,

[10] *The Criterion*, April 1931, 535.

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it took its cue from the ironic discomfitures of Mark Twain abroad and the individualism of Emerson and Thoreau. As Paul Rosenfeld observed in a brilliant essay on *Eimi*, the 'main symbol is a grotesque personal accident, the absurd contradiction of an expectation by an event'.[11] This is also the main symbol of *Innocents Abroad*. Cummings, the wise innocent, comically contrasts the chimera of the propagandists—a gleaming, modern, joyous Russia—with its dingy gloomy reality. Russia inflates the Yankee in him, enhances his Cambridge, Mass., parochialism, just as Italy made Mark Twain think fondly of his spick-and-span America. Like Mark Twain again, who professes astonishment at his fellow-tourists' ecstatic response to Leonardo's 'Last Supper' when he can barely discern its faded outlines on the battered wall, so Cummings expresses his own amazement that the American tourists he meets have transmogrified an *inferno* into a *paradiso*. The values with which he measures Soviet success and failure are the values of the American Transcendentalists who judged all institutions by the amount of life or death they contained.

Unlike *Innocents Abroad*, unfortunately, *Eimi* is not a good-natured book, for all its gaiety and beauty. Too often the comic mood subsides into sour sarcasm. He tells his Virgil that he doesn't hate socialism: 'so far as I can feel, I don't hate anything except hate'. Yet his shrill contempt, his tiresome jokes about vulgar Jews, his obsession with dirt and stench clash with his affirmations of hope, Is, Instinct. His book is not anti-Russian; Cummings responded to goodness and manhood wherever he met them. Nevertheless his hatred for tyrannical abstractions extended to the people who embodied them.[12] If his sharp-eyed honesty kept him from substituting the ideal Russia for the New Russia ('in all its slavic unfinishedness', as Ezra Pound put it), his romantic disregard for time and history and his unremitting devotion to the private self removed a large part of the indispensable social context from his candid gaze.

WALDO FRANK—novelist, critic, traveller—also went to Russia in 1931. His book, *Dawn in Russia*, came out a year later, and although it is inferior to *Eimi* as literature, it reflects a point of view more in keeping with the pro-Soviet mood. Not that Frank was uncritical of what he saw or less dedicated than Cummings to the cult of the flowering self, but he was more critical of America's spiritual and cultural inadequacies and had much greater confidence in the future of Soviet collectivism.

Although Frank was only five years older than Cummings, he seemed positively venerable in comparison to the 'bad boy' of Cambridge;

11 *Wake*, No. 5 (Spring 1946), 31.

12 His response to Soviet bureaucracy constitutes some of the most mordant satire of his book. See, for example, his happy recognition of art *sans* politics and his feelings toward the killing weed of dogma which destroys it (p. 58) and his amusing and savage résumé of the 'materialist dialectic' dispensed to visiting non-political Americans like himself (pp. 83–87).

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aesthetically and politically, they were worlds apart. In the twenties, Cummings and his friends spurned the notion of literature as a branch of morality and delighted in verbal experimentation, the lively arts, and the pleasures of pure sensation. Frank, who had been part of a circle that included such serious-minded and almost priest-like intellectuals as Randolph Bourne and Van Wyck Brooks before the First World War, retained the social concern of the Wilsonian era throughout the so-called jazz age.

Between 1917 and 1931, Frank published a number of volumes, fictional and non-fictional, in which he laid bare the inner poverty of an America that had squandered its 'spiritual substance'. Trips to Spain and Latin America brought him into contact with societies materially impoverished but organic and integrated. He called upon his countrymen to consider the possibility of a culture which would unite 'the world of fact in which we suffer all together with the world of dream in which we are alone', a society of separate persons whose individual natures would be liberated and extended through their harmonious identification with the Whole. He had not yet been to Russia, but one gathers from his random references to the Soviet Union that it shared with 'all the peasant and proletarian peoples of Europe' the 'deep potential energy', religious and aesthetic, that America lacked. He did not pretend to know what was actually happening in Russia, but he believed in 'the universal value of the Soviet experiment'. In professing to free men 'from servitude to wealth', the Russians were engaged in 'holy work'.[13]

As far back as 1917 Frank had published a prose poem, 'Holy Russia', in which he announced that his generation 'knew' Russia even before the Revolution. They had seen the unborn Russia foreshadowed in its tortured youth who had sought asylum in America, in its 'terrible' books, its songs and music. Out of Russia's agony, the poet declares, came life: 'the gladness in the gloom of her tales, the prayer within her angry symphonies, the hunger and sorrow of her prophets—all of the love of hating Russia is made manifest'![14] Apparently Frank had never renounced this messianic conception of Holy Russia although he recognised that the beleaguered Soviets, 'straining all forces toward that industrial reorganisation which alone can save the Revolution', and feeling impelled 'to overcome the self-indulgent "dreaminess" which was a vice in repressed Tsarist Russia', were deliberately suppressing the mystical predilections of the masses.[15]

Frank got his first look at Russia in 1931. He did not go as a convert, a pilgrim, or a detached observer, but as God's spy who would look at the USSR 'with the lazy eye of intuition'. Russia did not disappoint him nor did it totally allay his apprehensions. Communist

[13] Waldo Frank, *Our America* (1919), p. 231; *The Re-Discovery of America* (1929), pp. 264–265.

[14] *The Seven Arts*, May 1917, 60–61.

[15] *America-Hispana* (1931), p. 175.

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society, he believed, inevitably inherited the evils of bourgeois society; it was constantly threatened by 'a dogmatic rationalist creed (by no means discoverable in Marx) whose inadequate depth and breadth would ultimately exclude the creative energies of mankind'. But Frank was pretty well convinced even before he went to Russia that Marx's 'organic rationale' of revolution together with the spiritual resources of the Russian people would assure a just and creative social order.

Coming from Stockholm and Helsinki to the drabness of Leningrad did not seem to him a descent into unlife. The miserably clad homely crowds moving along the Nevsky Prospekt, far from resembling Cummings' dream-like un-done shades, seemed transfigured by an electric current. The Russian physiognomy spoke to him of 'confineless promise . . . intelligence, emotional complexity of the spirit, making the face of the average North American or Frenchman by contrast a mere smart grimace'.

He determined to familiarise himself with the 'dark root' of the Russian past before hastening in tourist fashion to the factories, workers clubs, hospitals, and schools. To the dismay of his guide, he explored Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg, that now abounded in rotten buildings and the human detritus of the Revolution. Its ugliness did not depress him for he saw it as 'the bleak root from which burst the red flowers—1905 and 1917'! Throughout the rest of the trip, he contrasted the almost ubiquitous squalor (the 'dismal heritage' of the past) with the transfiguring look of the proud citizens 'still forced to live in the husk of the days of their enslavement'.

There is something a little irritating in Frank's seer-like stare at the Soviet scene, his eye that penetrates the flux of appearance to the substratum of Reality, the ear attuned to the faintest reverberations of unspoken thought. The toilers in a communal dining room, he notes, 'have eyes that rest tenderly upon me'. A tiresome wait for a Volga steamboat enables him to become 'a fragment of living Russia', to immerse himself 'in this plasma of the Russian folk'. A Russian village beats with 'the pulse of earth and beast and man together'. Nowhere in Russia can one discover the money-making look. Russian factory workers (unlike the proletariat in many parts of the world) are happy

> because here are whole men and women. Although their individual job be a single motion endlessly repeated, although they stand enslaved for hours to the turn of a wheel which they must feed and feed—yet in these dismal halls there is a whole humanity. Dream, thought, love, collaborate in the tedious business of making electric parts, since these toilers are not working for a boss—not even for a living: the least of them knows that he is making a Worker's union, that he is creating a world.

Comments like these help to explain Evelyn Waugh's annoyance with Frank's 'pseudo-intimate personal emotions' and another reviewer's remark about the 'moral self-indulgence' common to most travellers to the USSR.

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Of course Frank does not always write so seraphically. He can be blunt in his fault-finding or reporting, whether he notes the poor food, the uncomfortable accommodation, the reluctance of all but the solidly entrenched communist to criticise the government, or a 'sugar-water' talk by the saintly Gorki. Clouds of doubt occasionally obscure his radiant vision of Russia's destiny. He understands why the regime carries on its war against the churches, but the crude anti-religious propaganda offends him. To employ a falsehood in order to emancipate a people enslaved by a falsehood is perhaps 'a need made acute by Russia's state of siege', but isn't there a danger, he asks, 'that the Communist truth take an accessible form that is half-truth? that the half-truth harden into a lie? that a new formal falsehood stifle Russia?' He considers the possibility as well that Russia might lose 'the spirit of Communism', settle into 'an industrialised, collectivist order, regimented by a new ruling caste'. Then it would 'become a menace: an engine of irresistible might (mechanised and well fuelled) which its rulers could direct in conquest against Orient and Europe'.

Frank refused to dwell upon these doleful speculations. The human nature of the Russians made such a course unlikely. The next phase in Soviet history would be the emergence from the economic to the cultural stage of communism after the USSR had made itself immune from the threats of the capitalists. In the meantime, every person of good will owed his loyalty to Russia, 'to its social aims . . . to the soldiers in the revolutionary ranks', but not to its methods and dogmas. Americans in particular, Frank concluded, had to eschew the 'false emulation' which betrayed the spirit of Russian innovation and to remain true to their 'own needs and intuitions'.

WHEN Edmund Wilson journeyed to Russia in 1935, events had occurred since the visits of Cummings and Frank which tempered the optimism of hitherto faithful fellow travellers: inside Russia, forced collectivisation, the mass deportation of the kulaks and the 'socially dangerous', and the sinister aftermath of the Kirov assassination; outside Russia, the successes of Mussolini and the German Communist Party's role in the rise of National Socialism.

Since the mid-twenties, Wilson's interest in Russia had gradually extended from its art to its politics, from Russian films to Marxism-Leninism, and by 1932 he was backing the Communist Party with the other 'cool-headed revolutionists' who looked to Russia. 'I, too, admire the Russian Communist leaders', he acknowledged, 'because they are men of superior brains who have triumphed over the ignorance, the stupidity, and the short-sighted selfishness of the mass . . . As a writer I have a special interest in the success of the "intellectual" kind of brains as opposed to the acquisitive kind'.[16] The American communists were delighted with what they chose to regard as his confession of faith

[16] 'What I Believe', *The Nation*, 27 January 1932, 98.

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although they were somewhat put off by his thorny individualism. As his friend Malcolm Cowley noticed, Wilson 'sheered away from all sorts of political groups even when their ideas appeared to be similar to his own'. This scepticism and open-mindedness made him receptive to ideological heresies tabooed by the American CP. For example, he approved of Trotsky's condemnation of the Party line on 'social fascism', criticised the repression of intellectual freedom in the USSR, and even listened to the 'slanderous vileness' of the 'degenerate' Russian émigrés. On the eve of his two-month visit to the USSR, it would have been hard to predict just what kind of report on Soviet society he would write.[17]

It appeared in book form as *Travels in Two Democracies* (1936),[18] the first section of which was composed of articles on Depression America written between 1932 and 1934. Presumably the reader was invited to contrast a riven, angry, and hopeless society with a slovenly confident one, but his vignettes of Soviet life interlaced with his own reflections on politics, history, and culture did not satisfy the partisans or the foes of the USSR. Wilson possessed no cosmic truth, as Waldo Frank did, which might have illuminated the inner meaning of the Russian experiment. He distrusted, and with good reason, the kind of instantaneous understanding displayed by Cummings. Each of the two 'democracies' had its special distinctions—America its durable republican values, Soviet Russia its place on the 'moral top of the world'—yet he did not give the nod to either. The people in both societies allowed 'obsolete authorities' to decide their destinies, invoked the same 'invisible forces' whether in the name of God or the Masses. Rather than rely upon these 'mythologies', Wilson preferred to fall back on 'accuracy of insight' and 'courage of judgment' (p. 325).

Wilson's Russian impressions must be tested by these standards. He describes first and then reflects, bringing into his explanations a wide and apposite learning, a sense of history, and a relish for the actual. He is not indulgent towards the Russians as Frank was or self-indulgent as Cummings was. Leningrad strikes him as shabby and drab, yet the 'dingy and mute and monotonous hordes' who 'move like slow floods of water' along 'the straight interminable streets' are neither electrically charged nor ghostlike. They aren't noisy but neither are they

[17] See *The New Republic*, 10 January 1936; 28 December 1932; *The New Masses*, 1 September 1936. That Wilson had doubts himself about his decision to use his Guggenheim Fellowship to visit Russia is borne out in a letter to his friend and mentor, Professor Christian Gauss of Princeton University: 'The recent events in Russia have inspired me with certain misgivings about my trip. The Comrades over here consider me attainted with Trotskyism; and I see that a number of people were expelled from the Marx-Engels Institute lately for "ideological perversion", a sin of which I'm as likely as not guilty.' *The Papers of Christian Gauss*, ed., K. G. Jackson (1957), pp. 304–305.

[18] The Russian section was republished in *Red, Black, Blond and Olive, Studies in Four Civilizations: Zuni, Haiti, Russia, Israel* (1956). In this version, Wilson added the notations he had omitted in 1936 together with retrospective comments. The revised edition, however, loses part of its force by being detached from its American half.

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'straining' or 'anxious' like the American crowds. The city belongs to them; they are 'not pitted against an alien environment'.

Although Wilson accommodated himself quite easily to that mixture of severity and slackness he found in the Russia of 1935, he had none of Frank's capacity for attuning his soul to the collective spirit of the Soviet toilers. The Park of Rest and Culture—'neutral, enormous, bare, colourless'—(which Cummings had rendered as one of hell's lower precincts) Wilson designated as a 'limbo'. Had these dumb expressionless crowds, he asked, lost all capacity for enjoyment? And yet they moved freely, unvexed by the harassments of petty officials.

Always alert and hawk-eyed, sensitive to the concretely typical and the implications of the seemingly trivial, inhaling nuances, Wilson made an admirable reporter. Few travellers to the USSR so adroitly avoided the temptations of over and under praising. 'People invariably come here', he wrote, 'whether they think they are for or against, in such an inflamed state of mind; and even those who are least inflammable are subject to those strange alternations of enthusiasm and disappointment'. A lost suitcase might signify to one traveller a breakdown of the Soviet system; a helpful official enforce a conclusion 'that the Russian peasants are the happiest in the world'. Wilson refused to 'gush' about the Soviet Union or do anything more than observe and think. He sniffed the smell of fear and said so. He asserted that Soviet patriotism could impel officials to justify the bad. He questioned Soviet claims that neuroses common to the West were unknown in the USSR. He deplored the persecution of political deviationists, the glorification of Stalin, and the Stalinist distortion of history. Emotionally and temperamentally, he seemed closer to the nineteenth-century Russian intelligentsia—the uneasy and alienated Dostoevskians and the Goncharov Hamlets who had 'come back as we had done at home to a straggling provincial civilisation'—than he was to the practical single-minded communists.

The unattractive features of Russia, it must be emphasised, did not distract him from the accomplishments of the Revolution. Fresh from observing the blights of his own country, he reminded his readers that some Americans also had to put up with snooping police.[19] He told his friend Mirsky that Ford's plant in Dearborn, 'completely walled off from the rest of Detroit', was subject to an industrial discipline and company espionage—not, he couldn't resist adding, unlike Russia's. At bottom, he genuinely liked Russians, approved of their programme, respected their leaders. The Russian masses endured a great deal, he thought, and yet appeared to be resigned to the hardships in store for them. As he passed through Poland, Germany, and France on his return to the United States, it seemed—especially to one who had

19 An attitude which he still retains. The two 'democracies' mirror each other's defects. Thus, the United States is also 'used to mediocrity', has its own cult of the common man. 'Our recent security purges and political heresy-hunts', he asserts, 'must have been inspired by the Russian trials'. Like the Russians, Americans have alternated between cycles of xenophobia and xenophilia. See *A Piece of My Mind* (1958), pp. 65–80.

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recently travelled through America and the USSR—that these former 'immense entities' resembled 'a pack of little quarrelsome states maintaining artificial barriers and suffering from morbid distempers'.

IN his final reflections, Wilson's mind flashed back to Lenin's tomb and to the man whose statue with its 'peering and genial' eyes he had first glimpsed in Leningrad. Cummings had also taken a long look at the embalmed Lenin and so had Waldo Frank. The faces of Lenin as they are described in their respective books serve as a kind of Rorshach test for the three observers.

Cummings sees Lenin's mausoleum as

> a rigid pyramidal composition of blocks; an impurely mathematical game of edges: not quite cruelly a cubic cerebration—equally glamourless and emphatic, withal childish . . . perhaps the architectural equivalent for "boo!—I scared you that time!"

and its sainted inmate as little more than a 'trivial idol throned in stink'. His descent into the tomb '(toward death's deification moving)', parallels Dante's descent into the lowest circles of hell, the furthermost remove from light and life. Cummings files slowly downward with the line of un-men, unmovingly moving 'toward the grave of themselves, all toward the grave of Self', and reaches the guarded 'prismshaped transparency' where he beholds 'a small-not-intense head and a face-without-wrinkles and a reddish beard'. The historical Lenin never appears. The Lenin of the crypt is a waxwork, less alive than the 'mightier deeper puppets' of Coney Island. He is 'silly unking of Un-', the Negation of negations, who merely says: 'I Am Mortal. So Are you. Hello', in short, an appropriate ikon for the country of the dead. Lenin, the dark necromancer, has become for Cummings the symbol of the mystagogue who animated an abstraction and thereby deprived of life the masses he ostensibly liberated.

Like Wilson, Frank was also struck by the 'huge iron "ikon"' of Lenin in the Finland Station, and like Cummings he stood in line to enter Lenin's tomb, thrust 'deep into earth to hold the body of the new earth savior'. Frank approached the holy sepulchre as a reverent pilgrim in rapport with the rest of the pious company, and he saw in the face of Lenin the history and meaning of the Revolution:

> He lies in a soldier's simple uniform with his hands clasped on his chest. The hands are delicate and pale and long: they bespeak precision, the exquisite capacity for pain is in them and the equal power to respond to pain with exquisite method. The head is bald, its roundness bulges forward at the brow, giving the dynamic quality of motion. All thought and feeling seem here perfectly conjoined, and the sure harmony has a single rhythm of the march, of indefeasible direction. I look on Lenin's face. The beard is cropped short and the mouth shows. The upper lip is long and hard, the lower pushes forward in the same indefeasible direction. The features have the Tatar glint that I have seen in Volga towns.

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> The eyes are shut, but were they open they would still be hidden. The face gleams with an intricate emotion. There is resentment in it, cold and terrible. There is pain, tender as a child's. There is intelligence, the response to both the pain and the resentment: it quickens the face, not with fire but light. And there is a terrible hilarity, the laughter of a storm ready to burst and overwhelm the world. The varying emotions merge in a calm integer: the pain has fused in the intelligence as understanding, the resentment has fused in it as will. The face is an intellectual engine fuelled by feeling. Death dims the brightness of the face, and shrinks the body. But death has made perfect the man's impersonal beauty. In Lenin's suffering, in his will to overcome the cause of suffering, in the pure methodology of mind that his will fathered, in this body of a man cleansed of the personal, I feel the embodied spirit of the Revolution.

Wilson's finely-modelled and resonant portrait of the face in Lenin's tomb dwells upon some of the features mentioned by Frank, 'the aggressive intellect of the box like skull', the 'slightly slanting eyes', the 'exquisite fineness' of the features. But Wilson detected nothing of the suffering Christ in Lenin's aristocratic lineaments:

> yet if this is an aristocrat, it is an aristocrat who has not specialized as one: and it is a poet who has not specialized as a poet, a scientist who has not specialized as a scientist. Nor is it in the least the face of a saint. Except for the slightly slanting eyes, it seems today hardly even the face of a Russian. For here has humanity bred, independent of all the old disciplines, the scientist whose study is humanity, the poet whose material is not images but the water and salt of human beings—the superior man who has burst out of the classes and claimed all that is superior which man has done for the refinement of mankind as a whole.

The entombed face which moved him so profoundly was the face of a poet-innovator who had summoned the Russian masses 'from their sluggish plasm'. It was the face of Marxism, as Wilson conceived of it in 1935—logical, naturalistic, anti-traditional—as well as the face of a hero who had forced the world 'to extend its conception of what man, as man alone, can accomplish'.

Wilson's left-wing critics praised the set-piece on Lenin but worried about its implications. Wasn't he developing a cult of genius? Didn't his concern for the superior person imply an almost libellous denigration of the masses? Perhaps *Travels in Two Democracies* reflected more than Wilson realised his feeling that democracy in both Russia and the United States tended 'to lower cultural standards'. Hence his attraction to the unterrified social engineer of Bolshevism who had energised a people and set them on the right path.

Looking back at himself twenty years later, Wilson declared that like 'other inheritors of the eighteenth-century tradition', he had overlooked the place of myth, ritual, and symbol in the USSR, and more significant,

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that he had failed to recognise behind his studied rejection of supernatural religion the 'yearning for "Holy Places"' that emanates from his passage on Lenin's face. Moreover, he had not yet perceived Marxism's 'disguised utopianism' even as his 'atavistic Protestantism' made him susceptible to Marxian morality. When he finally saw the mythical and dogmatic elements in Marxism, he abondoned them as dangerous ingredients in an otherwise plausible system of social analysis. Unlike Cummings and Frank, Wilson never made pronouncements on the sacredness of Personality or on the meaning of history, but neither did he relinquish a qualified trust in the power of the 'human will' and 'moral force' in mankind's struggle towards order in an impersonal universe.

Wilson had read the proceedings of the first Zinoviev-Kamenev trials while floating down the Volga and had concluded even before his return that they were faked. Not long after, he was writing his angry but controlled reflections on the crimes of Soviet officialdom. Waldo Frank agonised over the first trial, called upon the Soviet Union 'as a loyal defender of your great cause' to explain herself to the world, concluded several years later that the trials were probably valid, and—still agonising over the 1937 trial—recommended an impartial inquiry to reassure the demoralised 'young liberals and radicals' that all was well. In 1940, he stigmatised Stalin's 'methods of blood and guile' while re-affirming his faith in 'the Russian future'.[20] As for Cummings, he shifted his attack on the 'kumrads' from prose to poetry:

every kumrad is a bit
of quite unmitigated hate
(travelling in a futile groove
god knows why)
and so do i
(because they are afraid to love).

The 'red youthful giant' who had awakened the 'deepest hopes' of American radicals in the twenties and early thirties had suddenly transformed himself into an ogre, a devourer of his own children. And blotting out the faces of Lenin—the aristocrat, the engineer, the philosopher-king, the saviour—were the masks of his dissimulating successor.

[20] See *The New Republic*, 27 February 1935, 12 May 1937, 19–20; *The New Masses*, 18 May 1937; Waldo Frank, *Chart for Rough Waters* (1940), p. 75.

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THE WEBBS AND THE NEW CIVILISATION

Marcel Liebman

Writing the preface to the 1942 edition of Soviet Communism: a new Civilization, *Beatrice Webb asked a rhetorical question: 'Why have I exhausted the dwindling strength of an Over-Eighty in arguing that Stalin was not a dictator whose word is law, that the USSR was not only a fully fledged political democracy but also an industrial democracy with a powerful trade union and consumers cooperative movement?' Why indeed? The enormous volumes the Webbs produced in the mid-thirties constitute one of the most embarrassing performances ever perpetrated by foreign observers of the Russian scene. What they had to say about the democratic character of Stalin's constitution, the democratic processes of election (described in apparently convincing detail), the constructive work of the OGPU (to quote one of their own subtitles), the character of the world communist movement or the Moscow trials, betrayed both demonstrable ignorance and profound credulity. The Webbs' excellent work on social conditions in Britain did not make them very astute observers abroad, they were hopelessly at sea in their judgments on a country of which they knew next to nothing, basing themselves entirely on official handouts and uncritically accepting them as gospel truth however ludicrous. M. Marcel Liebman has resisted the undoubtedly strong temptation to write about their* Soviet Communism *in a sarcastic vein, in the face of almost overwhelming provocation; but then it is, after all, a very revealing piece of evidence, not about the state of the Soviet Union, but about the state of mind of a considerable segment of opinion outside Russia; as such M. Liebman deserves our gratitude for having treated it with great, sometimes perhaps excessive, seriousness.*

SEVERAL authors have tried to offer an explanation of the 'conversion of the Webbs', but not all have sufficiently enquired into its causes. Harold Laski, in a lecture he gave in 1947, did no more than recall their disappointment by the many defeats suffered by Labour in England, above all the decomposition of the MacDonald Government in 1931; and their own 'seduction' by the Russian democratic constitution of 1936, the draft of which was completed at the moment when their *Soviet Communism* was published. The explanation offered by Margaret Cole is also summary and partial, and hardly more convincing: that Soviet society had undertaken to reorganise itself by relying upon those institutions which the Webbs had studied with the greatest attention, because they regarded them as guarantees for a socialist future.

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Barbara Drake, who accompanied Sidney Webb on the second journey he made to Russia (without Beatrice), renders an account that is more complete, and in my view nearer to the truth. She notes, as determining factors in the evolution of the Webbs, the rise of fascism linked with that of monopoly capitalism, the Labour crisis, and, on the other side, Soviet planning and the abandonment by the Russians of all further experimentation with workers' control. Lastly Trotsky, in *The Revolution Betrayed*, alluding to the 'triends of the Soviet Union' that the Webbs had become, also offers an explanation, more brilliant in its formulation than complete or objective in content.

Here we shall try to correct and above all to complete these much too succinct and fragmentary data, and after that, to enlarge the problem to the dimensions of the ideologies of Fabianism and communism, transcending personalities and contingent events. We may thus be able, definitively, to see in what measure there was a 'discovery' rather than a 'conversion', an 'abjuration', and not the revision and correction of a mistaken or hasty judgment.

It is certain that the economic and political crises between the wars had much to do with the evolution of the Webbs' thought. Gradualism, and the tactics of 'permeation' that went with it, were basically too optimistic not to have been shaken by the disappointments of the interval of peace and the prospect of the further trials that Europe had to confront. The impression produced by these worsened political and social conditions was all the greater because Britain, with its endemic unemployment, now found itself at the centre of a world economic crisis; and while, on the plane of politics, fascism was making only insignificant progress, Labour on the other hand was revealing its weakness and its limitations. As for capitalism, the spectacle of the misery of the masses and the riches of the few, added to the stagnation of the economy, were proclaiming its defeat and confirming the verdict that the Webbs had pronounced in *The Decay of Capitalist Civilization*. Europe, finally, and Great Britain in particular, saw their earlier domination shaken to its foundations.

The English political crisis of 1931 is in this respect of less importance than is usually thought. Beatrice, indeed, did not wait for this before passing severe judgment on the Labour Party for having committed itself to 'pro-Sovietism'. True, the Labour disaster of 1931 must have helped to align Sidney with Beatrice, but in any case it was the latter who frequently gave the association its basic initiative, for she had a quicker mind and a richer imagination than Sidney.[1] Moreover, the brief analysis he made of the crisis of 1931[2] does not indicate that the consequences he deduced from it had caused him to reverse the reformist thesis that he regarded as proven. The remedies that he proposed to the Labour Party did not rise above the commonplace, or anyhow showed no sign of any 'agonising reappraisal' in the choice of methods of political action. They

[1] *Cf.* G. D. H. Cole, *Persons and Periods* (London, 1938), p. 331.
[2] S. Webb, *What Happened in 1931: A Record*, Fabian Tract No. 237 (London 1932).

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suggest, at the most, that the English political crisis of 1931 proved the extraordinary strength of British capitalism and of the governing class in England, and that, even if the capitalist system was showing some signs of degeneration, it nevertheless controlled the English economy and the principal sources of information. The 'richer imagination' and 'quicker mind' of Beatrice had preceded him on the way to such a discovery, and had formulated the reality of it in much clearer and more radical terms.

Fascism, too, played a part, though a less important one, at least before the publication of *Soviet Communism*. Its coming to power in Italy neither shook Beatrice's convictions nor blunted Sidney's democratic optimism. Nevertheless the confrontation between the parties of the extreme right and their enemies on the left certainly helped to consolidate candidates for the seizure of power around the two opposite poles: and between the anti-democratic conservatives and the communist advocates of violence, Beatrice Webb could see no glimpse of a possible third force. The anaemia of the democratic left—that is, of the social-democrats—seemed to her obvious and perhaps irremediable. After the triumph of Hitlerism, anti-Hitlerism undoubtedly inclined the Webbs further towards the Soviet Union which, up to 1939, presented itself as the one decided adversary of Germany.

The Constants in the Webbs' Philosophy

Whatever may be the importance of events such as the rise of fascism and its victories in Italy, Germany, Austria, and Spain, and whatever the importance of the democratic and socialist decline in Western Europe, it is certain that they would not have made such an impact as they did upon the minds of the Webbs—or in any case, would not have prompted them to such warm adulation of the Soviet Russia which they had formerly condemned with such implacable severity—if the communist regime had not presented to them, at least in its first, Stalinist, version, characteristics that corresponded to certain constants in the Webbs' philosophy and to some of their deepest and most permanent aspirations.

The fundamental characteristic of the economic and social regime of the USSR could not fail to meet with the approbation of Sidney and Beatrice Webb. Russia's installation of planning upon the ruins of capitalism appealed equally to their hatred of the latter, and to their love of an ordered society functioning according to the foresights of a rational plan.

As early as 1897, in their *Industrial Democracy*, they were affirming that: 'When the conditions of employment are deliberately regulated so as to secure adequate food, education, and leisure to every capable citizen, the great mass of the population will, for the first time, have any real chance of expanding in friendship . . . and of satisfying the instinct for knowledge or beauty.'[3]

[3] Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Industrial Democracy* (London, 1897), vol. ii, p. 849.

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This first allusion to a society whose economy would be rationally organised, was to be further defined and amplified afterwards. One could multiply quotations in proof of the Webbs' preference for an economic and social system no longer motivated by individual initiative or by commercial, industrial, or financial groups without responsibility, but by an authority acting in the interest of the collectivity and with knowledge of its needs. Planning, in their view, was an essential element of socialism. As they wrote in 1913 in a series of articles in the *New Statesman* entitled 'What is Socialism?', 'Socialism involves the substitution of co-operation for competition. Every kind of co-operation among men requires a coherent plan which can be explained to the participants . . .'[4]

It has been said that 'if any man deserves to be regarded as the prophet of planned socialist economy, that man is Sidney Webb'. For 'it is their vision of an ordered and planned economic system'[5] that gave British socialism the idea of planning. And in a review, very favourable on the whole, of *Soviet Communism: A New Civilization?* the *Times Literary Supplement* (7 December 1935) rightly observed that 'the implementation of the Plan in Soviet Russia has also without doubt exercised a real fascination over the minds of those who have always shown an inclination towards organization and planning'.

This Russian planning, inaugurated as a system with the first five-year plan of 1928, charmed them all the more by having one incontestable advantage over all the projects elaborated by the Webbs; that of having entered into the realm of realities. Surveying its first practical results, the Fabian theorist found proof of the realism of a conception which people had often reproached as merely utopian. And Barbara Drake tells us with what joy he discovered, on his second journey in the USSR, those mechanisms of which he had formerly undertaken the 'theoretical description'. 'See, see, it works, it works!' he murmured, beaming at his companion.[6] Sworn enemy of utopias and convinced pragmatist that he was, his feet were now planted on the ground of a reality he had *foreseen* and not merely *imagined*.

True, some other political systems had foreshadowed one form or another of state planning. But it could not remain a matter of indifference to the Webbs that Russian communism alone had had recourse to it, not in order to buttress a capitalism threatened to its foundations, but on the contrary to supplant capitalism after having destroyed and extirpated it. For anti-capitalism, as well as planning, was one of their ideological constants. In *The Decay of Capitalist Civilization* they had subjected it to a systematic indictment no less from the moral point of view than from that of efficiency. All the evidence they produced was of implacable severity: the parasitism of the propertied classes, whose riches were often the product of plain robbery; the dehumanisation of

[4] The *New Statesman*, 26 April 1913, p. 76.
[5] G. D. H. Cole, *Persons and Periods*, pp. 321, 327.
[6] B. Drake in *The Webbs and their Work*, by M. Cole (London, 1949).

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Is the USSR a Political Democracy?

In answer to the second question—is the USSR a political democracy? —it is clear that, tested by the Constitution of the Soviet Union as revised and enacted in 1936, the USSR is the most inclusive and equalised democracy in the world. (p. XXI.)

Is Stalin a dictator?

Sometimes it is asserted that, whereas the form may be otherwise, the fact is, that while the Communist Party controls the whole administration, the Party itself, and thus indirectly the whole state, is governed by the will of a single person, Josef Stalin. First let it be noted that, unlike Mussolini, Hitler and other modern dictators, Stalin is not invested by law with any authority over his fellow-citizens, and not even over the members of the Party to which he belongs. He has not even the extensive power which the Congress of the United States has temporarily conferred upon President Roosevelt, or that which the American Constitution entrusts for four years to every successive president. (p. 333.)

Stalin is no dictator

Here I will note that the Communist Party, unlike the Roman Catholic and Anglican Church, is not an oligarchy; it is democratic in its internal structure, having a representative Congress electing a central committee which in its turn elects the Politbureau and other executive organs of the Communist Party. Nor has Stalin ever claimed the position of a dictator or a fuehrer. Far otherwise; he has persistently asserted in his writings and speeches that as a member of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR he is merely a colleague of thirty other members, and that as far as the Communist party is concerned he acts as general secretary under the orders of the executive. He has, in fact, frequently pointed out that he does no more than carry out the decisions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. (p. XX.)

Free elections

What is not usually understood by foreign observers is that there is, at each election, not one election meeting, but (as often in the village elections) several successive election meetings for the same electoral unit, at which candidates are nominated, discussed and either successively eliminated or carried forward to the final meeting when the last vote is taken. This, the only decisive vote, is usually unanimous (or more strictly, what in England is called *nemine contradicente*), a fact which has often led to the inference that there has been no real exercise of choice by the electorate. On the contrary, the procedure is one of elaborate sifting of the nominations by various, often many, successive votes at the previous meetings, by which the less popular candidates have been eliminated. (p. 31.)

Free speech

It is not surprising therefore that (threatened with foreign invasion) there should have been intolerance on the part of the Soviet government towards free thought and expression, by word and by writ, of antagonism

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to its home and foreign policy. How does this intolerance differ in character from the intolerance manifested in Great Britain? As we have already described, free criticism, however hostile it may be, is permitted, even encouraged, in the USSR . . . Moreover, when anxious to encourage historical research the Soviet government is singularly open-minded. (p. XIV.)

Soviet Trade Unions

The important place held by the trade union as a part of the constitution of the USSR has been explicitly affirmed by no less an authority than Stalin himself (p. 124). But what, it may be asked, does the trade union in the USSR retain from its model in British trade unionism? Put summarily, it may be answered that the Soviet trade union, like the British, is emphatically the organ of the wage-earners as such; it is based on optional individual membership and subscription; it appoints and pays its own officials and manages its business by its own elected committees; it conducts, through its highest committees and its national officials, the collective bargaining with the employing organisations by which the general scheme and standard rates of wages are fixed. (p. 168.)

The GPU

. . . there is now, we think, little or no sign of general disapproval among the four-fifths of the people who are manual workers in industry or agriculture, either of its continued existence or of its vigorous activities. . . 'In all fairness', writes the one who has put into a book the most personal knowledge of the GPU, 'I must add that, wherever the GPU strikes, it is usually with reason. Perhaps the accusation is trumped up or exaggerated; perhaps the particular incident leading to the arrest is but a pretext. Yet behind these possibly flimsy excuses, the GPU is practically dead certain the accused was engaged in activities against the state. When they do strike, they strike sure and hard. Their case is practically watertight'. (p. 483.)

And again Stalin

Among the leaders of the Communist Party there ensued a tacit understanding that Stalin should be 'boosted' as the supreme leader of the proletariat, the Party and the state. His portrait and his bust were accordingly distributed by tens of thousands. But the idolisation of Stalin has largely ceased to exist in the Soviet Union of today. In the village, municipal and union soviets, local heroes are held up for the admiration of and imitation of the people . . . The portraits of these heroes and heroines are to be seen everywhere. Moreover, Stalin's recent step down from the pedestal of the Holy Father of the Communist Party to the prosaic position of Prime Minister, elected strictly according to the constitutional procedure of a political democracy, has, so to speak, secularised his status and made it that of any other Prime Minister ultimately dependent on the votes of the people. (p. XLV.)

[*All quotations taken from the third, one-volume edition of* Soviet Communism: a new Civilisation (1944).]

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an entire class treated as a commodity, a feature which was no temporary aberration of capitalism but an evil inherent in its nature; the squandering of natural resources; deterioration of the quality of production, the commercialisation of all values and the encouragement of the worst perversions; the abuses of monopoly power; the wars that capitalism engendered; as well as the strife between classes with all its disastrous consequences.

By substituting planning for this corrupt and corrupting capitalism, planning in the framework of an economy where the motive of profit ceased to be predominant, the Soviet Union was attaining a decisive stage in the building of a society corresponding to the aspirations of the Webbs.

It is not enough to say that the Webbs' admiration for the Soviet Union proceeded from—among other things—its abandonment of workers' control. More was involved in this; and it is the entire attitude of the Webbs towards working-class action, trade unions, and, more generally, towards the masses that has to be taken into account.

No doubt it was with some complaisance that they explained how and why the experiment of workers' management and control was abandoned in Russia hardly a year after it had begun, in the first days of the October revolution.[7] Doubtless they also found some satisfaction in that abandonment, seeing that from their earliest works they had been opposed to all forms of workers' self-management. Thus, in their *Industrial Democracy* (p. 818), they had said there was no question but that under a collectivist system, as under capitalism, the workers organised in unions would have no more authority to determine production than any other citizens and consumers. This was because the Webbs did not believe that ' the workers desire to take part in the management of enterprises, nor could one place any confidence in them (in that respect)'. They were declared opponents of such slogans as the mines for the miners.[8]

But their opposition was not limited to this one aspect of the working class and trade union problem. It is their whole attitude towards the unions, and above all to revolutionary syndicalism, which must be noted here. That current of thought, which came to England from France about 1910, met from the first with their vigorous opposition. They devoted to it, in 1912, a fairly substantial study which put it in the dock, and pronounced a condemnation founded as much upon reasons of morality as of efficiency. ' We regard Syndicalist proposals ', they wrote, ' . . . not only as ethically objectionable, but also as fundamentally impracticable.'[9] They justified this by showing the disastrous effects of a propaganda that tended to habituate the workers to purely negative and destructive behaviour, ranging from the boycotting of elections to

[7] *Soviet Communism* (3rd ed., London, 1944), pp. 499–500.

[8] S. Webb, *Socialism: True and False*, p. 14. Fabian Tract No. 51, London, May 1894. ' We do not desire to see the mines and the profits from the mines, transferred to the miners, but to the community as a whole.'

[9] S. and B. Webb, *What Syndicalism Means*, p. 144.

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ca'canny strikes. The resort to such methods, especially to the general strike, must necessarily lead to a violent reaction and perhaps to the suppression of the unions. Moreover, if the means proposed by revolutionary syndicalists were detestable, the ends they had in view were no less so, for they were essentially utopian.

Note their hostility to the strike as an instrument in the social struggle. It is characteristic of the Webbs, recurs at different stages of their career, and reveals their attitude towards mass manifestations. Thus, from 1910 to 1914 they were vigorously opposing Guild Socialism, and every effort towards making the unions more combative by frequent and sometimes violent assertions of their rights. This was a period of great agitation and ferment in the history of the English labour movement, foreshadowing the events of 1919–1920, and the incomprehension that the Webbs showed for the more dynamic elements in English socialism was repaid by an unpopularity which Beatrice Webb takes no pains to conceal in her *Journal*. She notes there, at the end of 1913: 'We are extraordinarily unpopular today—more disliked . . . than ever before. The propertied class look upon us as their most insidious enemies; the revolutionary Socialist or fanatical sentimentalist sees in us, and our philosophy, the major obstacle to what they call enthusiasm and what we call hysteria.'[10]

This opposition to the movements and agitations of the masses did not diminish in 1919 and 1920, when the railway workers and miners attempted in vain to force the nationalisation of their industries. Writing about the railway strike of 1919, Beatrice Webb, after indicating that in her opinion the conservative government had wished for and perhaps deliberately provoked it, added that nevertheless: 'We think the railwaymen were justified in making the continuance of the war wage a test question—though the manner of the strike is not easy to justify.'[11] Her reaction was exactly the same the following year, during the great strike of the miners: 'The miners have a strong case; but it is not a case that justifies—from a national point of view—direct action of the magnitude intended' (p. 187).

But above all it is the attitude of the Webbs during the general strike of 1926 that shows the depth of their hostility to direct action by the masses in general, and to the strike in particular. On the first day of this strike, Beatrice Webb confides to her *Journal*: 'The General Strike will fail'; a reflection that could not have affected her to tears, since she adds: 'We have always been against a General Strike.'[12] And on the next day she defines the nature and meaning of their objection: 'We personally are against the use of the General Strike in order to compel the employers of a particular industry to yield to the men's demands, however well justified these claims may be. Such methods cannot be tolerated by any government . . . even a Labour government would have to take up the

[10] *Beatrice Webb's Diaries* (1912–1924), pp. 15–16 (London, 1952).
[11] Ibid. p. 168.
[12] Ibid. (1924–1932), p. 90.

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challenge. A General Strike . . . if it succeeded in coercing the community . . . would mean that a militant minority were starving the majority into submission to their will, and would be the end of democracy, industrial as well as political.' And she adds that the defeat of the general strike, 'that monstrous irrelevance', will be recorded by future historians as 'the death gasp of that pernicious doctrine of "workers' control" of public affairs through the Trade Unions and by the method of direct action' (pp. 91–92). When, nine days after its outbreak, this general strike ended in the failure that Beatrice Webb had predicted and even hoped for, she greeted that resounding defeat, heavy with consequences for the English socialist movement, with the comforting observation that: 'the failure of the General Strike shows what a *sane* people the British are' (p. 98).

This attitude had nothing in common with simple reformism, but was determined by the most narrow conservatism, accompanied on the practical plane by a refusal on the part of the Webbs to take any effective part in the work of helping the strikers' families. 'Ought we or ought we not to give and ask others to give to the fund for the miners' wives and children? Neither Sidney nor I would have given a penny to it if no one would have been the wiser. I gave my name to the Committee and sent a cheque for £10, simply because I conformed to the loudly expressed opinion of the world of Labour—with which I secretly disagreed' (p. 103). Such relentless logic calls for no comment.

Underlying all these trenchant declarations is the fundamentally distrustful, often hostile, and sometimes contemptuous attitude of the Webbs towards the popular masses. Of this one can find as many expressions in Beatrice Webb's *Journal* as there are manifestations and proofs of it in her and her husband's public life. It is the contempt of the intellectual for the uneducated man; that of the idealist for those who cannot understand such elevated thoughts and are actuated only by motives of interest. At the time when she still believed in Labour as the party of social progress, Beatrice Webb thought the masses unworthy of the organisation that claimed to represent them: '. . . the Labour Party, in its ideals and its programme represents . . . the special interests of the disinherited and propertyless men and women of all races. And disinherited and propertyless men and women are not specially moral and intelligent persons—not even the majority of them—they are just the lowest strata of average sensual men. The creed of the Labour Party is too good for its ostensible constituents'.[13]

During the General Strike of 1926, perhaps partly from the effects of age, this contempt was yet more stridently expressed: 'The British are hopelessly good-natured and commonsensical—to which the British workman adds pig-headedness, jealousy and stupidity. What oppresses me is the fear that these elements of crass stupidity and pig-headed

[13] Ibid. (1912–1924), p. 163.

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obstinacy may prevent the revival of British trade and that Trade Unionism may diminish and not increase efficiency'.[14]

How could the Webbs have put their trust in the crowd, whose unreflecting enthusiasm, passionate movements, ignorance, and fundamental lack of discipline, to say nothing of its vulgarity, shocked the sense of order, organisation, and rationality, of such intellectual planners? The sheer incompatibility of temperament stares out from the pages of *Beatrice Webb's Diaries.*

Under these conditions, things that would have shocked believers in 'mass spontaneity', 'direct action' or 'workers' self-management'—such as the regimentation or enrolment of citizens in institutions or places of work dictated from the summit of the hierarchy—all that systematically imposed discipline must on the contrary have reassured the Webbs. Their initial hostility to the Russian revolution had been caused, apart from considerations arising out of the exigencies of the war, not so much by their opposition to collectivism or communism, nor even (as we shall see later) by the absence of political freedom, but much more by their objection to such an upsurge of popular forces, by the anarchy and chaos which they regarded as inevitable and disastrous results of all revolutionary movements. For whatever justifications they put forward for the events of 1917 in their *Soviet Communism,* and for all the posthumous homage they rendered to the genius of Lenin, it was only after the reaction of 1920, after the retreat of the revolutionary flood and its canalisation, that the Webbs were able to appreciate the greatness of the builders of communism. Shocked as they had been by the destructive phase of the revolution, just as they always were by the strikes and direct action that they likened to sabotage, they were no less exalted by the constructive period that followed: and although Thermidor was not enough to reconcile Sidney to the revolution of 1789, Stalin opened the eyes of the Webbs to the historic significance of October 1917. As they wrote in *Soviet Communism,* the Soviet regime 'was the reverse of government by the mob'.[15]

Bureaucracy and Technocracy

'The Webbs found in the Soviet Union only an administrative mechanism and a bureaucratic plan. They found neither Chartism nor Communism nor the October revolution'.[16] Anyone might recognise the style of Trotsky in that criticism of their book from the left. One might at the same time have detected the essential complaint against them—that they began to love the USSR only when the Soviet bureaucracy had taken over the regime.

To try to reduce the Webbs' admiration for the USSR to this alone is an unfair simplification. But to leave it out of account would leave the analysis of their evolution without one of its main components. It

[14] Ibid. (1924–1932), p. 98.
[15] *Soviet Communism,* p. 344.
[16] L. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed* (London, 1937), p. 286.

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must be admitted that the reputation of bureaucrats attached to the Webbs, and especially to Sidney, dates from their first appearance in public life. They shared it with the Fabians of the 1880's, of whom G. D. H. Cole said that they were for the most part disposed to consider socialism in terms of efficiency first of all, and to apply to international politics the conception of a social order founded on the competence of experts.[17]

In the labour movement, and in the working-class movement in general, especially among socialists of the left, the Webbs have long figured as the arch-bureaucrats, as 'illiberal old bureaucrats without a spark of humanity'.[18] It may be, as G. D. H. Cole has said, that this reputation is perhaps not altogether deserved,[19] or, as Professor Tawney affirms, belongs rather to caricature.[20] But undeniably it is also not without foundation, and rests on pronounced and verifiable tendencies of the Webbs; especially of Sidney, who could be said to have 'the mentality of the Civil Service; that is, a propensity to conceive every idea in function with the institutions necessary to carry it out',[21] and who has also been called the 'ideal civil servant'.

These tendencies moreover found expression in their writings. In casting up the account of their career, their aspirations and the realisations of their aims, Beatrice declared in *Our Partnership* that they had 'placed all their hopes in the working class, served and guided, it is true, by an elite . . . of experts who, without claiming any superior social status, would be content to exercise the power conferred upon them by their science and their long administrative experience'.

That trust in experts which, if we are to believe Margaret Cole, damaged Sidney Webb's work as Secretary of State for the Colonies, also finds expression in *Industrial Democracy,* where the pretention of the trade unions to manage the economy is rejected, while the right to do so is claimed for the 'directors of industry'; and in *What Syndicalism Means,* where the necessity, in a socialist economy, of 'highly qualified experts . . . and a discipline applied to the whole personnel of management' is forcibly emphasised [22]; and finally, in *What is Socialism?* where the Webbs make the pursuit of social progress conditional above all upon the formation and development of a class of 'subaltern officials' (*New Statesman,* 6 September 1913).

For all that, it would be wrong to suggest that the Webbs had a blind confidence in technocracy. They affirmed emphatically that the authority accorded to 'experts' and 'directors' ought to be limited by the right of the collectivity to take the ultimate and most important decisions.[23] This did not however prevent them from conceiving society

17 G. D. H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought,* vol. ii, p. 192.
18 M. I. Cole, *Beatrice and Sidney Webb,* p. 46.
19 G. D. H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought,* vol. ii, p. 214.
20 R. H. Tawney, *The Webbs in Perspective,* p. 8.
21 G. D. H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought,* vol. ii, p. 210.
22 S. and B. Webb, *What Syndicalism Means,* p. 140.
23 S. and B. Webb, *Industrial Democracy,* p. 848.

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as a managed society, guided by a scientific and moral elite whose authority resided in their competence, a society in which a disciplined mass accepted this management which, for those who assumed it, was a duty and a charge rather than a privilege.

To what extent did Soviet Russia fulfil those requirements? That cannot be fully answered here: it is clear, however, that the credit accorded to experts in the USSR, to their competence, and above all the powers vested in an elite in the shape of the Communist Party—'something in the nature of a religious order, a congregation of the faithful who will also be skilful technicians in social reconstruction'[24]—presented features characteristic of the Webbian and Fabian philosophy.

It is true that *Soviet Communism* does not study the Soviet bureaucracy described and designated as such: the term 'bureaucracy' does not appear in the book until page 648. And though they abundantly describe the functioning of the 'bureaucratic' organs, they nonetheless deny that the Soviet regime can be presented as a bureaucracy. According to them, that is an accusation arising essentially from 'the average sensual man's impatience of the unavoidable apparatus of any highly developed industrial community'. And they say that this impatience is 'due to ignorance or misunderstanding of what is necessary for the efficient working of any social organisation', and arises from 'an essentially anarchist' mentality.[25] But the arguments put forward by the Webbs do not carry conviction; they strengthen rather than dispel the suspicion of complaisance with regard to the bureaucratic tendencies in the Russian system.

'Friendship for the Soviet bureaucracy is not for the proletarian revolution', observed Trotsky, writing about the Webbs' book on the Soviet Union, 'but, on the contrary, insurance against it'.[26] That is a snap judgment and does not get to the bottom of the problem—far from it. But one cannot help thinking that, however biased he was, Trotsky had nevertheless scored a hit.

To this long enumeration of the permanent characteristics of the Webbs' thinking let us add, more briefly, their love of science. It undoubtedly passed through a long development. It is inherent in the mentality of the Webbs, also in Fabianism with its 'scientific', semi-academic approach to the social problem. At the age of 25, Beatrice Webb already thought that the most fruitful kind of service to society was to devote oneself to 'the investigation of social phenomena'. And this same Beatrice wrote nearly at the end of her life, about her remarkable union with Sidney, that 'what bound us together as associates

[24] *Beatrice Webb's Diaries* (1924–32), p. 295.
[25] *Soviet Communism*, p. 970.
[26] L. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed* (London, 1937), p. 285. Trotsky makes easy game of this apology for an aristocratic freedom of limited scope, by remarking in his autobiography that: 'The Fabians are indignant when they see the people's revolution depriving "educated persons" of freedom, but they find it natural for the bureaucracy to deprive the proletariat of freedom'.

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was our common faith in a deliberately organised society ; our common belief in the application of science to human relations with a view to betterment'.[27] Here again, one could multiply quotations showing that the Webbs had far less confidence in the struggle between classes or in political action than in sociological research, for the building of a more just society. The promotion of science in the Soviet Union therefore found response in one of their special preoccupations, and had a prior claim on their admiration.

In his essay on the political thought of the Webbs, Leonard Woolf asserts that their condonation of the communist excesses is to be explained not by lack of humane feeling or insensibility but by their doctrinaire minds. And there was indeed a certain dryness about the Webbs, some expressions of which we have already noted—a refusal to yield to feeling, in order to safeguard a dogmatism, which did not however exclude ethics.

Fabianism and Communism

In a letter to *The Times* (13 August 1931) that aroused world-wide interest, G. Bernard Shaw, whose sense of humour was irrepressible, proclaimed that 'Russian communism must neither be confused with anarchism nor with syndicalism. . . . Russian communism is Fabian socialism'. We were left guessing how much of this was Hibernian wit and how big a grain of truth it contained.

At first sight one could hardly imagine two currents of thought more unlike each other than Fabian reformism and revolutionary communism. Theoretically, there is an abyss between them, and on the plane of realities too, their respective achievements and the results that can be claimed for them—in short, their historical records—have nothing in common. Where the Fabians recommend objective study of social facts, the communists incite to action and are on their guard against the snare of objectivity. The former address themselves mainly to a social elite and, in any case, to an aristocracy of mind whereas the latter seek to educate the masses, that education itself consisting of practical revolutionism. What then could the Fabian study circles have in common with such a popular, proletarian, plebeian movement as the Communist Party?

To give a fair answer to that question one must beware of stating it in terms of absolute and abstract categories. For after all, everything depends upon the historical phase in which communism finds itself, and the economic circumstances conditioning its action. The aspect of the Soviet Union in the 1930s could only very vaguely evoke the image of a truly communist society. Between that image—a projection into the future of the Marxist economic and social analysis—and a Soviet Russia wholly absorbed in the work of industrialisation, in order to construct, amid the most frightful agonies and cruelties, the *foundations* of the communist regime—what an enormous difference!

[27] In G. B. Oxnam, *Personalities in Social Reform* (N.Y., 1950), p. 45.

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And on the other hand, when the October Revolution exploded, raising already exacerbated passions to a paroxysm, seeming only to confound confusion, unleashing violence and hardening enthusiasm, did not communism represent just what Fabians hated most of all—disorder and anarchy? It is significant that in the first years of the Russian Revolution the Webbs wanted to see nothing in it but a specifically Russian manifestation of syndicalist anarchism, that 'pernicious' because essentially destructive doctrine. But no sooner does the wave of revolution recede and the constructive phase of communism commence, than the Fabians begin to re-consider their attitude. Bolshevism, in fact, takes on a new visage; its cultural ideal of *homo bolshevicus* is superseded by that of *homo sovieticus,* the revolutionary agitator gives place to the producer. Kamenev, admittedly a born conciliator and one of the most moderate of Bolsheviks, had stated in 1924: 'we have come out of the period of landslides, of sudden earthquakes, of catastrophes, we have entered on a period of slow economic processes'.[28] A few years later, this radical change in communism's needs and methods must have struck the Webbs, and contributed to their 'conversion', as it brought the Bolshevik pioneers back into ways more familiar to Fabians than the rocky paths of revolutionary enterprise. Certainly the producer too is doing a revolutionary work, he is reinforcing the Soviet regime, in its industrial structure especially, and his work is in fact the communist society in gestation. But though the effects harmonise and the motives coincide, what a difference in kind! And is not everything in the manner of action?

And also in the rhythm that history imposes upon those who are the makers of it. The precipitate haste that rules in the great cataclysms of revolution is followed by the more moderate cadence without which the work of the builders would be impossible. No one saw that better than Lenin himself when he said, in a speech of December 1921: 'Learn to work at a different tempo, reckoning your work by decades not by months'. Such an estimate corresponded perfectly to Fabian calculations. 'Here is work for whole decades', said Lenin in the same speech. Those distant horizons recalled the pictures of the future painted by Fabian reformers, with their far-distant perspectives.

The Fabian now feels more confidence. As soon as it is a case of setting up new institutions, of inventing new social techniques, he feels he knows where he is. The revolutionary syndicalist having been brought to heel, made to understand that socialist discipline has become the supreme necessity, the hour of the expert has arrived at last. Not that the spirit of the Revolution is dead, or that bureaucracy or technocracy have triumphed, but there is a change of climate, and the order of priorities and imperatives is changing with it. Communism undergoes less of this change than Soviet society does. Communism is a world movement of universal protest and demand; and although strongly

[28] Quoted in E. H. Carr's *A History of Soviet Russia: Socialism in one Country (1924–1926)*, London, 1958, vol. i, p. 24.

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influenced by the Russian situation, it maintains its character of protest and revolt in an international society that is still capitalist. And that is why the Webbs never set the seal on their admiration for Russia by joining the Communist Party.

There is a passage in *Soviet Communism* about the Western communist parties, where the Webbs fall right back into the depth of the old Fabian pedantry, and declare outright that 'these parties are not made up of the right sort of people' (p. 894). And, perhaps confusing the professional revolutionary with the sober bureaucrat, they explain that the members of the Communist Party bear no resemblance to 'the men and women whom Lenin enrolled as professional revolutionaries in the Bolshevist party of 1903–1914', whom they describe as individuals 'elaborately instructed, strictly disciplined, and willingly obedient'. What they deplore in the communists of their day is that they have the spirit of revolt in the blood, and not of construction, and that 'it is combating their enemies they are after, not converting these opponents to communism'. It would of course be an exaggeration to suggest that the Soviet Union, unlike the Western communist parties, had rejected the 'critique of weapons' and opted for the typically Fabian weapon of proselytism. But at least it reassured the Fabians by its eminently constructive desire to build a new order and, what is more, to build it under conditions of order. Comparing, in her *Journal*, the state of things in the United States and in the Soviet Union, Beatrice Webb perhaps discloses the very root of her thinking when she asserts that the USSR shows its superiority in its respect and enforcement 'of law and order'.[29]

That this order proceeds not from a capitalist state and a mercantile class, but from a society in which the cult of science flourishes, and that the impulse to progress is given by an elite in the form of the Communist Party, were additional reasons for Fabian approbation. As everyone knows, the millions of members of the Communist Party form an 'order' very different from the few hundreds in the Fabian Society. But great and numerous as are the differences between them, there is also at least this analogy: both conceive—in unequal degrees, it is true—that social organisation must proceed from an elevated, enlightened, and beneficent source. The relationship between this authority and the mass is differently estimated by Fabians and communists. To the former, as we have seen, the mass are simply the beneficiaries, the objects, of a reformist activity. The communists, on the other hand, rely upon the active masses and are nothing without the latter, previously organised, guided and orientated. Both the one and the other, however, are bitterly opposed to the 'spontaneity of the masses', it shocks their scepticism and mistrust; and though the Webbs were certainly very far from Lenin in 1917, they were certainly farther still from Rosa Luxemburg.

Lastly, and perhaps above all, the Fabians, with their confidence in experts and administrators and their instinctive mistrust of all forms of

[29] *Beatrice Webb's Diaries* (1924–1932), p. 246; for the same remark, p. 261.

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Utopia, professed always to confine themselves to realistic proposals, to the real and immediate possibilities of social construction and reform, to the concrete realities. And now Soviet Russia had become a reality, more impressive than a Lord Mayor in that respect; a reality, moreover, in which a prejudice for, or an attachment to, certain values certainly played some part. Among the attractions that the Soviet Union could offer to its Fabian visitors there was one we have not yet mentioned, which perhaps loomed larger in their eyes than any other. It existed. The prestige of efficiency and success, with its special appeal to English pragmatists, atoned for the darker patches in a picture too rich to allow of crude simplifications. All that the Webbs had said in their *Decay of Capitalist Civilization* about the industrial revolution, when they were depicting the horrors of it, can be applied *mutatis mutandis* to the Soviet Union; after all 'much is subsequently forgiven to a revolution which succeeds'.[30]

Does this mean that the Webbs, in reorientating their allegiance, or at least their aspirations towards the East, were simply and faithfully pursuing their Fabian line? To say this, one would have to deny any evolution in their political ideas after the crisis in the Western world; and, as we have seen, there was most marked evolution in the case of Beatrice. It is undeniable that upon a number of points their principles —and the principles especially—grew more radical. While maintaining some of the characteristics of the right—extreme distrust of the masses, for instance, in contrast to their trust in experts—they moved rapidly towards the left of English socialism, after having been the incarnation of its right. Professor Tawney may still claim that, so far as Great Britain was concerned, their pilgrimage to Russia made no difference to their opinions—'They continued . . . to believe that given the will, parliamentary government, whatever the limitations of its inevitable gradualism',[31] retained all its value—but the assertion is unconvincing. It takes no account, in particular, of Beatrice Webb's reviving the question of the 'inevitability of gradualness'; nor of what is clearly expressed in *Soviet Communism* about the party system; nor of their criticism of the socialist movement in Western Europe, paralysed by its contradictions. In 1931 Beatrice Webb noted in her *Journal*: 'The trend of my reputation is clearly to the left and not to the right' (p. 263). And the last ten years of their lives must have hastened that progression.

In the last analysis, the Soviet Union satisfied both their new aspirations and their oldest and most enduring convictions. Its reign of order and discipline allayed the fears that revolutionary socialism had always aroused in them: the regimentation of the masses banished the spectre of anarchy. But the destruction of capitalism, the consolidation of collectivist structures, the industrialisation of the country, the immense cultural effort, and finally the hostility to fascism, all this corresponded with the radicalisation of their thinking and with their socialist ideals.

[30] S. and B. Webb, *The Decay of Capitalist Civilization*, p. 78.
[31] R. H. Tawney, *The Webbs in Perspective*, p. 11.

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What we can learn from the Webbs' Sovietophilia is, briefly, that reformism consists in a recoil before revolution, in rejecting it for the future, the immediate future above all; but that this does not exclude approval or confirmation of it after the event. Reformism can conceive itself only as a projection towards the future. It loses its meaning as soon as it is directed to the past. This obliges it to admit, in the course of historical events, certain lacunae corresponding to the revolutionary periods, exceptions to the general rule—parentheses in history, so to speak. As Bernard Shaw wrote in his letter to *The Times*: 'If a violent revolution broke out in England . . . gradualism would be just as inevitable on the day after as on the day before'.

But what can one do on the day itself, that would satisfy the Fabian canons of non-violence and peaceful diffusion of socialism? The weakness of the Webbs and of Fabianism is that they have no answer to that question. For if Soviet civilisation is truly superior to its Western rival, ought the Western socialists to wait passively for the triumph of the truth? Or, remembering the only advice that the Webbs deigned to give them, that of meetings between socialist and communist administrators, are they to synthesise all the dynamic forces of society? To believe in that, one would need to have plenty of illusions and a high coefficient of political myopia.

This is not the only important lacuna in the Webbs' analysis. Nowhere do they observe that what the Soviet regime constitutes is not the realisation of communism, but a revolutionary attempt to industrialise and socialise an economically backward country, a civilisation still mediaeval in many respects; a revolutionary effort to 'skip the stages' —to jump over the capitalist stage of economic evolution, or abbreviate it to the utmost. The Webbs, Western socialists and sociologists writing for a Western public—ought they not to have marked out the difference between this situation and that of industrialised Europe?

This article is a shortened version of a study published in two instalments in *The International Review of Social History* (Amsterdam), No. 3, 1960, and No. 1, 1961. In that study *Soviet Communism: a New Civilization?* and other works of the Webbs are analysed at length.

Correction.

By a regrettable oversight, a footnote was deleted from p. 80 of the January 1962 number of SURVEY, giving a reference to the article by Messrs. P. Katona and L. Jotischky on 'Hungary, Five Years after the Revolution', *The British Survey*, November 1961. As a result it was not made clear that the two phrases translated from Hungarian on p. 79, line 45, and p. 80, line 1, were quoted from that article.

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THE DAYS OF THE LEFT BOOK CLUB

Alfred Sherman

> *much better be ruled by Stalin than by a pack of half-witted and half-hearted Social-democrats . . .*
>
> —G. D. H. Cole, *Europe, Russia and the Future*. 1942.

THE 1930s are a sitting target. Little research and less ingenuity are needed to demonstrate the manifest absurdity of the beliefs religiously held by the 'popular-front left' during the decade, particularly their image of the Soviet Union, which formed the keystone of their whole ideology. You have only to leaf through almost any one of the books and periodicals published then to find passages which would bring a blush to the cheeks of their authors; the lessons of experience and Soviet 'true confessions' alike have consigned them to what their authors would have called 'the rubbish tip of history'. But to show their absurdity is not enough; what remains to be explained is how and why they went astray, what political and psychological mechanisms were at work to make otherwise intelligent people, many of whom had been trained to think critically, play the fool so completely. This is no academic question; the mechanisms are still at work. Though the 'red thirties' were followed by the 'red-faced fifties' with their motif of 'what fools we were', many attitudes and syndromes which characterised the thirties are still visible, with comparatively minor changes.

The term 'popular-front left' needs defining. It never included the entire labour movement, but during its hey-day brought in non-socialists who stood to the right of the Labour party on domestic affairs. While the solid core of the Labour leadership, round Attlee, Bevin, and Morrison, opposed both the popular front as a political tactic and many of its ideological axioms, 'non-party progressives' of one kind or another, including even a few Liberal and Conservative members of parliament, became associated with the front and accepted its image of Soviet achievements and intentions to a greater or lesser degree. I have excluded the Communists from this essay as far as possible, simply because they are a distinct problem; the difference between the images of the Soviet Union current in Britain in the late thirties and late forties cannot be ascribed primarily to the success or failure of their activities; like the poor, they are always with us.

I think the term image can be used, although it goes without saying that the left's picture of the Soviet Union was neither homogeneous nor constant—nothing about the British left ever has been. It varied with its holders' place in the political spectrum at any given time, and the direction in which they were moving. Yet the images had enough in

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common to justify generalisation. The composite image was of a new civilisation, moving with history, putting into practice the frustrated aspirations of Western socialists and liberals: making the best use of labour and resources by planned economic development; giving full scope to scientists, artists, and intellectuals, and bringing art to the people; reshaping international relations along rational lines and resisting fascist expansion, which the Western democracies seemed to lack the will or ability to halt. Where the question of political terror was concerned, the image was diffuse; some regarded it as a necessary evil, some deprecated it, others preferred to ignore or deny it. What characterises the expressions of faith in the Soviet Union which abounded in books, articles, and the testimony of returning delegations, is that their authors were projecting their own aspirations and frustrations onto the Soviet scene and then using the image they created as a vindication of their own beliefs and hopes. If the Soviet paradise did not exist, it had to be invented, to substantiate their socialist faith. It was not so much that they were deceived by Soviet propaganda as that they deceived themselves with the aid of Soviet propaganda. I have chosen some typical examples from two 'Peace and Friendship with the USSR' congresses held in London in 1935 and 1937 respectively, attended by a galaxy of 'names' from almost all walks of life and skilfully steered by a few competent Communist party members. They were two among the many symposia of their kind during the period under review here.

'WE must face it', Bernard Shaw told them; 'things are going Russia's way. Apparently providence is getting sick of capitalism . . . capitalism is getting sick of itself . . . communism is certainly not getting sick of itself'.[1]

The Soviet system 'is not faced with our problems of distribution, our problems of trade booms and slumps, of poverty in the midst of plenty, of ever-increasing unemployment; they have no need of colonies or spheres of influence, foreign markets, or sources of supply of cheap raw material; in fact of all those things which are the motives of war, and for which other nations must inevitably fight', said Viscount Hastings, a prominent Labour peer (p. 78).

Members of scientific and artistic professions returned from short tours of the Soviet Union convinced that the Russians were successfully implementing their own private dreams. They quite frequently outdid the Russians' own claims and attributed to them intentions and achievements never mentioned in Soviet sources. 'If you want to put on a play in this country, you find yourselves up against the most appalling difficulties, unless you happen to be either a very wealthy man, and ready to lose your money, or a speculator', complained Mr Geoffrey Whitcomb, secretary of the British Drama League. It was a foregone conclusion that after a fleeting visit to Moscow he should discover that there, 'the theatre

[1] *Britain and the Soviets.* The Congress of Peace and Friendship with the USSR., 1935, p. 8.

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is conducted with an ease, and a sense of security which is only possible where you have an easy financial situation . . . the theatre artist in Russia can concentrate on the play itself not worried by financial questions . . . he has the whole resources of the state behind him . . . he can take as long as he likes for rehearsing and production . . . theatre in Russia has gained enormously by coming down into the very lives of people. The children in Russia are taught from their earliest beginnings to understand the theatre' (pp. 105–7)—this at the very time of Meyerhold's arrest, of the attacks on Tairov, and the closure of the second Moscow Art theatre.

Dr Edith (now Lady) Summerskill, M.P., who had been drawn into Labour politics primarily as a result of her dissatisfaction with the public health and medical services in Britain, returned from a short trip to the Soviet Union convinced that there her ideas had been implemented and vindicated. In capitalist medical schools—she complained—'we are not taught how to prevent disease, but only how to cure it . . . this, I say, is the wrong avenue of approach . . . In Russia, things are different . . . the profession of medicine is put at the service of the worker, for the benefit of the worker . . . here the worker may wait in the out-patient department for five, six, or even eight hours—like sheep—for the services of surgeons or physicians. This is the system here. In Russia health services are the first care of the Republic. Marx said: "The first care of the state should be the mother and child" . . . The Soviet medical service will possibly be in a very short time the best in the whole world. I am convinced of that'. Dr Summerskill described the superiority of Russian operating theatres, with their air-conditioning, over British ones, the flats available for nurses, the privileges enjoyed by medical workers. She was in raptures over the medical potentialities of dictatorship: 'When I read about Ivan the Terrible, I was not so impressed by the fact that Ivan used to gouge out people's eyes but that he imported four German doctors into Russia. I also remember reading about Peter the Great, and again the fact that he built Leningrad at the expense of millions of lives did not impress me so much as the fact that he introduced medicine into Russia' (pp. 151–56).

'I consider Russia must be a great country because the rich people there are the authors and playwrights', said an authoress. 'Sholokhov has sold three million copies of his books . . . quite a successful novel in England will sell about 2,000 copies' (p. 143).

'The advantages on the side of Soviet science are unlimited resources, the advantages of doing things on a big scale, the planning of the relation between industry and science, together with enormous enthusiasm . . . central heating on a city-scale is developing further than in any other country', Professor Blackett testified (pp. 88–92).

I HAVE quoted at length from these representatively fatuous passages, not to score points against their unfortunate perpetrators, but because I think that the mood they reflect provides the key to an understanding

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of the way the left's image of the Soviet Union burgeoned during the thirties, to wither a few years later. The frustration generated by domestic and international developments explains more than does any analysis of the jejune and inconsistent theorising by its ideologists, the late Professors Cole and Laski, Victor Gollancz and John Strachey, or their exploitation by the Communist party. Whereas the best of the pamphleteering and theorising which has been the by-product of political conflict from the Peloponnesian war to modern times retains an interest and relevance which makes it readable today, the 'popular-front' writings, on the Soviet Union and in general, are quite unreadable, and their writers, whatever their present position, are already glad to forget them. They lack both depth and originality, and consist of little more than a translation of Leninism into more or less academic English, and descriptions of a Socialist Utopia located in the Soviet Union. They did not even introduce original fallacies.

Their main theses were: first, that capitalism had reached an insoluble crisis which it had decided to solve by imposing fascism; second, that socialism was the only solution for man's ills and would be difficult to attain without an uncompromising revolutionary struggle of one sort or another, since the capitalists would certainly resort to violence and national treason; third, that capitalist liberties were neither real nor permanent, whereas socialism would offer far wider and deeper freedoms. This led them automatically to the belief that the Soviet Union, as the world of the future as well as the bulwark and leader of the struggle against fascism, deserved not only support but unquestioning loyalty from 'progressive-minded' people.

'Much of the suppression of liberty in the Soviet Union of which we are told so much in the capitalist press . . . goes along with a tremendous enlargement of liberty in new democratic non-capitalist forms', Cole never tired of asserting. 'Great suppression of personal liberties was unavoidable if the new order were to survive at all. Already, I believe, the Soviet Union is feeling its way towards the restoration of many of those liberties which had to be curtailed [this was at the height of the purges] and as soon as the Soviet leaders were able to feel even a reasonable degree of security against external intervention we shall find that they are not merely putting back the liberties they have restricted but establishing a new and higher kind of liberty, hitherto unknown in the world—a liberty extending to every section of the people, and women equally with men. Let us not forget that many of us—especially those who are comfortable British bourgeois—are inclined to think of liberty mainly in terms of the forms of freedom which we actually enjoy as a class privilege, and to ignore altogether those basic liberties of human life which the great majority of people have never yet possessed in any country of the world.' [2]

[2] *For Peace and Friendship*. Proceedings of the Second National Congress of Peace and Friendship with the USSR, 1937, p. 150.

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In the course of his progress from one set of political certainties to the next, Professor Laski became convinced that democratic institutions are inseparably connected with the drive towards economic equality and that this drive was on the point of bringing about an irreconcilable conflict between democracy and capitalism. 'Wherever the movement of democratic opinion seeks to revise the traditional foundations of economic individualism the owners of property seek to change the system which makes that movement possible. The survival of political democracy today is, all over the world, definitely impossible unless it can conquer the central citadel of economic power. There cannot, in a word, be democracy unless there is socialism.'[3]

This thesis led him to the certainty that 'Fascism, in its various national forms, is simply the expedient adopted by capitalism in distress to defeat the democratic political foundations with which it could be successfully linked in its period of creative expansion'. By the middle thirties Professor Laski had come to the conclusion that capitalism had exhausted its creative and liberal potentialities not only in Europe but also in the USA.[4] The necessary alternatives he believed to be either fascist dictatorships of some kind, accompanied by predatory wars, or the emergence of militant socialism, and he came to view the Soviet Union in an increasingly rosy light, and to justify both Lenin's original seizure of power by force and the regime's subsequent policies of repression.[5]

AS the thirties wore on these views and prophecies gained far wider currency inside the British left and on its fringes. In 1930 they were considered almost a lunatic fringe; by 1939 they had come to be recognised as legitimate and had penetrated universities and academic life, press, trade unions, and in some cases seemed near to becoming the new orthodoxy. If, as is now apparent, they were counsels of frustration, there was ample cause for frustration.

The first shock the British labour movement received was the economic crisis and the break up of the Labour Government. Electoral victory in 1929 had seemed to be the triumphant culmination of decades of struggle; at last labour had reaped the fruits of restraint and had formed a majority government pledged to usher in the New Jerusalem. Instead, they experienced economic crisis, a shrinkage of the national income and serious unemployment, betrayal by their trusted leader, and crushing electoral defeat. Hitler came to power in Germany, and a similar regime appeared to have come within a stone's throw of achieving power in France. Worse still, for the British left's confidence in democratic progress, the Liberal-Socialist popular-front Government in Spain had become the target of an armed uprising by the forces of conservatism

[3] H. J. Laski, *A Grammar of Politics*. Preface to the Third Edition, London, 1934.
[4] H. J. Laski, *The Rise of European Liberalism*, London, 1936, p. 251.
[5] H. J. Laski, *Where Do We Go From Here?*, London, 1940.

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and reaction (though not, in fact, by the largely liberal capitalist class) as the communists and leftwingers had warned. The League of Nations, in which the Labour party had believed much as it now believes in the UN, proved to be completely ineffective in the face of Axis aggression, which went forward from victory to victory.

Neither Conservatives, Liberals, nor official Labour had much to offer the perplexed in the way of guidance. The right had no economic policies apart from restrictionism and appeals to the logic of the economic system—Keynesian thinking never influenced British policy-making till the forties, by which time it was largely irrelevant. Labour ideas on economics had not developed since MacDonald defected. Right-wing sympathies for fascism may have been exaggerated by subsequent tractarians, but they were real enough, particularly as they were reinforced by the moral cowardice and wishful thinking which afflicted Labour, Liberal and Conservative alike and made them reluctant to face the need for rearmament and a strong foreign policy. (It should be remembered that Chamberlain's Munich policy was approved of by official Labour and that the attitude of left-wing organs like the *New Statesman* was frequently highly ambiguous; the only significant outspoken criticism came from a group of Tories whom many of the left dubbed warmongers.) Whether or not it would have been possible to build up an effective collective security pact between the Western countries and the Soviet Union, given the suspicions on both sides, the reluctance of the Poles and Rumanians, and internal developments in the USSR, is arguable. But it certainly seemed worth while trying; the fact that the most vocal opposition to agreement with the Soviet Union tended to come from circles which showed sympathies for the fascist powers, or at least the desire for an understanding with them, gave superficial verisimilitude to the popular-front thesis that the right stood for capitulation to fascism and the left, headed by the USSR, for the defence of democracy.

Under the extremely sombre conditions of the mid-1930's it was only to be expected that many of those who felt the dangers most keenly should be prone to wishful thinking, or should at least try to present the Soviet Union in the rosiest light possible in order to strengthen their arguments in favour of a collective security pact and effective resistance to Axis encroachment. The out-and-out Conservative anti-appeasers like Churchill and Salisbury did not stand in need of ideological justification for common action with Russia or with anyone else where it seemed to suit national interest. But left-wing intellectuals (and semi-intellectuals) who felt impelled to find full theoretical justification for every step they took, built up their image of Russia in accordance with their views on what British foreign and domestic policy should be, and some Liberals and even Conservatives who felt strongly enough about foreign affairs followed them.

'When the Socialists came to power in Russia you had a government representing the people, which was prepared to look at the problem of

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peace on its merits, irrespective of sectional interests', claimed Lord Allen of Hurtwood.[6] Since opponents of a rapprochement with the Soviet Union accused the Soviet Union of using collective security to further the expansion of communism, popular-fronters felt bound to deny this, and many of them pointed to Trotsky's defeat by Stalin as assurance that the USSR would follow a realistic non-ideological policy of 'socialism in one country', leaving the rest of the world to choose its own system. Mr Robert (now Lord) Boothby, M.P., declared it to be 'foolish to ignore the note of practical realism which has been struck in the Kremlin ever since Mr Stalin came to power'.[7] Sir Bernard Pares, a one-time Director of the School of Slavonic Studies in London University, could assure his readers that 'Stalin, as opposed to Trotsky, has committed himself to the formula that revolution is not for export but is the affair of the population concerned'.[8]

AGAINST this background the purges not only failed to shatter the popular-front left's image of the Soviet Union but even strengthened it more often than not. This was true not only of Cole and Strachey but also of men like Pares and like Elwyn Jones (a Q.C. and Labour M.P. who subsequently returned to an impeccably Liberal position).[9]

The *New Statesman* was an important spokesman, expression, or moulder of 'popular-front left-wing' opinion throughout the period, on the Soviet Union as on other questions. In addition to offering open house to communist and simple Sovietophile propaganda, with occasional grudging hospitality to directly opposing viewpoints, the *New Statesman* had its own characteristic approach, expressed in editorial articles, and signed articles by the editor, Kingsley Martin, by the *New Statesman* Moscow correspondent, and by its close associates like Professors Cole and Laski.

The *New Statesman* ethos was basically apologetic and defensive. Whereas the communists admitted nothing wrong about the Soviet Union, and presented a picture of material and spiritual paradise, the *New Statesman* set out to disarm criticism by admitting the truth of some criticism and then explaining it away as an unfortunate concomitant of great historical change. 'The truth about the plot for which Zinoviev, Kamenev and the others were executed, we do not know . . . very likely there was a plot'. But, said the editorial, admitting that the purges give cause for concern, 'let us see this matter in perspective. . . . A social revolution is accompanied both by violence and by idealism. Its success must be judged primarily by the permanent achievement of its economic aims . . . there may be . . . regrettable aspects . . . the power of the GPU and increasing control of the Soviet bureaucracy are, historically speaking, of secondary importance' (5 September 1936).

6 *Britain and the Soviets*, p. 26.
7 ibid. p. 4.
8 Bernard Pares, *Russia*, 1940, p. 255.
9 F. Elwyn Jones, *The Battle for Peace*, 1938.

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During the height of the purges the paper's Moscow correspondent wrote that 'The new Soviet Constitution is not merely a promise. Many of its provisions register changes which have already taken place . . . the slow eclipse of the GPU commenced in 1931' and was further eroded after Kirov's assassination, when many leading GPU officials were sent to labour camps. In 1936 he was writing that 'Ruthlessness and terror had ceased to be the state's most trusted weapons . . . the reign of law is now definitely established in the USSR. There is little doubt that if the present normal times continue—in other words, if there is no foreign war—Soviet citizens will hereafter enjoy inviolability of person, home, and mail . . . Dictatorship yields to democracy'.

Articles on Soviet affairs during this period seldom appeared to evoke active disbelief, let alone ridicule, from the readers, judging by the otherwise most active correspondence columns, which vibrated into outraged polemics when the late C. E. M. Joad dared write slightingly of Soviet ethics.

One correspondent observed that Soviet citizens are permitted by the admirable economic system to marry young, and therefore 'from an early age live a satisfied sexual life and do not feel the same urge to experimental philandering as the more inhibited and immature English youth'. Another reported: 'It is collectivisation which has finally conquered the food problem; the bounteous results cram the foodshops of the entire Soviet Union—delegations of peasants from the Ukraine, Uzbekistan, from all the national minorities come to Moscow to tell how much better off they are than before . . . the housing situation is perceptibly easing as the new blocks of flats steadily rise' (Pearl Binder, 7 March 1936).

Writing after the Radek trial and a meeting with Trotsky, Kingsley Martin insisted on retaining what he called an open mind about the genuineness of the trials, quoting Dudley Collard and D. N. Pritt as reliable observers ('Pritt's integrity is beyond question'. 10 April 1937). In 1938 Kingsley Martin still believed that there had been a plot, though he thought that its extent had been deliberately exaggerated by the GPU (22 January 1938).

It remains to be added, in fairness, that the *New Statesman's* attitude to Stalinism was on the whole more reserved in the thirties than in the post-war period, when it found mitigating circumstances even for Stalin's last and craziest purge in 1952/3.

THE general mood produced its own new media. The Left Book Club, which seems to epitomise the whole period, was the most prolific though by no means the most effective, since it reached a comparatively limited readership, and anyway preached mainly to the converted. Its fortunes provide a fairly faithful reflection of the rise and decline of the popular-front left. It was founded early in 1936, after the Comintern had belatedly given up its 'social-fascist' line in favour of the popular

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front, by Professor Laski, John Strachey—whose political peregrinations had led him to the extreme left of the Labour party—and Victor Gollancz, a publisher whose many talents include a keen sense for changing public moods, and who is worth a volume to himself in any social history. The editorial director was a communist intellectual, John Lewis, also an interesting character who had been a Church of England clergyman before his conversion to communism.

Membership of the club entailed the obligation to buy its book of the month at a reduced price. This assured turnover provided a guaranteed market which enabled Gollancz to publish a 'popular-front left' book every month, which would have been inconceivable in other circumstances. Of course, not all the books were by communists or fellow-travellers, but books on the Soviet Union during this period all supported the positive image to a greater or lesser extent, and none opposed it. *Soviet Democracy* by Pat Sloan, *A Short History of the Russian Revolution* by R. Page Arnot, *The Soviet Sixth of the World* by Hewlett Johnson, *Soviet Policy and its Critics* by J. R. Campbell are examples of more or less straightforward communist propaganda, while writers like Sir John Maynard catered for the more sophisticated.

The club began with a membership of some ten thousand, a considerable proportion of them communists, but the membership grew rapidly, and drew in Labour intellectuals and demi-intellectuals who felt something had to be done. By the end of the year membership had risen to thirty-five thousand, and it grew steadily till mid-1939 when it touched the fifty thousand mark. By the end of that year it had begun to fall off as rapidly as it had grown, and by mid-1941 was back to a hard core of ten thousand. The club continued to publish its book a month until it was dissolved in 1948, but its Soviet image dimmed after the Nazi-Soviet pact, and though pro-Soviet books were published again after mid-1941 their tone was less exuberant and more apologetic; things were never quite the same again after Victor Gollancz's *Betrayal of the Left* denouncing the Nazi-Soviet pact with the full bitterness of disillusion.

The image was spread to a far wider audience, and for longer, by the Penguin and Pelican Specials which began to appear in 1937, written by more or less the same authors as the club's books, but with a circulation several times as large, and, unlike the latter, they did not preach mainly to the converted. For example, Sir Bernard Pares' *Russia*—quoted earlier in this article—sold 273,000 copies; D. N. Pritt's *Light on Moscow* and *Must the War Spread*—October 1939 and January 1940—sold 150,000 and 135,000 respectively.[10]

But the image was not confined to political books and papers; it was featured in other forms in caricatures and novels, in 'light reading' of one sort or another, in the popular press and on the radio. The sinister

[10] I am grateful to Penguin Books, Ltd., and Victor Gollancz, Ltd., for providing me with data on titles and circulation.

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Bolshevik agent gave way to the accomplished advocate of peace, the clear-eyed red-armyman standing guard, the articulate worker and peasant sharing in the dawn of a new civilisation. If the Soviet secret agent appeared at all, he was the man who exposed fascist designs.

Eric Ambler's novels, which then as now were best-sellers, illustrate the changed mental climate. In both *Cause for Alarm* and *Uncommon Danger* the pattern is the same. A good-hearted but naive Anglo-Saxon finds himself drawn into a dangerous mix-up with German and Italian fascist agents, and is rescued in the nick of time by a man who turns out to be a Soviet agent busy foiling the fascists and safeguarding peace and freedom. The Soviet agent shows considerable charm and resourcefulness ('You could not help liking Zaleshoff', the hero of *Cause for Alarm* concluded); in the midst of hair-raising but always credible adventures he explains Socialism, Capitalism, and Fascism far more convincingly than the average Penguin or LBC work did. 'You must take my word for it that I am on the side of the Angels . . . the people who can resist the forces that have beaten the people of Italy and Germany to their knees', Zaleshoff insisted; the left-wing image of the Soviet Union did exactly this.

OUR understanding of the nature and causes of the wide currency of the left-book-club image of the Soviet Union would not be complete without reference to its subsequent decline. At first sight the Soviet image seemed to have regained much of what it lost during the Nazi-Soviet pact and Finnish War period by the Red Army's record after 1941, when the Beaverbrook press outdid the *Daily Worker* in painting the picture of benign but shrewd pipe-smoking 'Uncle Joe', a kind of 'super-Beaver'. But an ally, however welcome, is different from an *alter ego*, and the general admiration for 'our gallant Soviet ally' was, for many, no more than a transition to post-war disillusion.

But it would be difficult to prove that the decline of the Soviet image in many left-wing circles after 1945 can be ascribed simply to disillusion; after all, most of what was to be known in 1947 could have been known ten years earlier. Because the Soviet image of the thirties had been largely a projection of the left's attitude towards its own milieu and problems, it was the changes which occurred in these from 1939 onwards that largely brought about a new receptivity to the facts of Soviet life. With the outbreak of war much of the frustration which had engendered popular-front leftism melted away. The marchers of 1937 found a place in the armed forces, ABCA war-work, and various ministries; Labour was in the coalition, and the war seemed bound to lead to a new and better world. The Labour victory in 1945, without any attempt on the part of the 'capitalist class' to overthrow the new Government, post-war reconstruction, and the new lease of life post-war capitalism had evidently acquired, demonstrated by full employment and

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economic expansion, radically changed the mental climate. The intellectuals became more receptive to what they would previously have dismissed scornfully as 'anti-Soviet slanders'. Not all of them, of course; some still could not look the facts straight in the face, and continued to prefer myths, but they found a steadily diminishing audience, till they seemed mere left-overs from the thirties, 'such darling dodos' as a novelist subsequently called them. It is worth noting that these developments owed practically nothing to the disclosures made in the course of de-Stalinisation; they reached and passed their climax well before Stalin's death. They affected, however, only the 'floating clientele'; the hard core of the lunatic fringe remained unshaken even by official Soviet revelations.

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How they saw it

THE MOSCOW TRIALS

Hugo Dewar

AT the 22nd congress of the CPSU, N. S. Khrushchev once again raised the question of 'the great purge', this time in open session and with more detailed references to individual instances of Stalin's persecution of his opponents. Khrushchev did not directly mention the three great Moscow trials, but the whole tenor of his reply to the discussion on the party programme made it clear that these trials were frame-ups. His remarks on the Kirov assassination alone were sufficient to demonstrate this, since the Kirov affair was the king-pin of the entire structure of these trials.

The assassination, twenty-five years ago, of Sergei Mironovich Kirov —secretary of the Leningrad party organisation and member of the Politburo—was the signal for the merciless repression of all Stalin's known, suspected, or potential opponents in the party. The range and thoroughness of this action was matched by the domestic and international propaganda campaign that accompanied it: for the stalinist objective was not merely the physical destruction of all those who might conceivably constitute a rallying point for opposition within the party; not merely the creation in the USSR of an atmosphere of terror in which self-preservation should become the over-riding consideration for each individual; it was also the complete moral annihilation of the leading figures of the Russian Revolution. Only Lenin would remain untouched, a great messianic figure; and by his side would rise the figure of Stalin, his sole true disciple. Consciousness of the past history of the Russian Revolution was to be erased from the mind of man and a new history was to take its place, the Stalin legend.

The campaign launched for this purpose—which may truly be termed a brain-washing campaign—was on a colossal scale. Its highlights were the three great Moscow trials in August 1936, January 1937, and March 1938, when almost the entire Bolshevik 'old guard' was found guilty of organising the murder of Kirov, of wrecking, sabotage, treason, plotting the restoration of capitalism, etc. And it was precisely the defendants at these trials who, with their self-accusations, their abject penitence, their acceptance and praise of Stalin's policies, showed themselves as eager as the Stalinists to support this campaign. Never before in history had there been a conspiracy of such dimensions, conspirators of such former eminence, and at the same time conspirators so uniformly anxious to attest the unrighteousness of their cause and the utter criminality of their actions.

At once sordid and deeply tragic, combining the grim reality of apparently normal juridical procedure with the lack of any evidence

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against the accused other than their own nightmarishly unreal confessions, these trials shocked the liberal conscience of the entire world. Yet it was, strangely enough, in Great Britain, a country proud of its tradition of liberal thought and action, that the most influential voices were raised in their defence.

Thus A. J. Cummings, then a political columnist of considerable standing, although admitting to some difficulty in accepting the guilt of all the accused, wrote of the first trial that 'the evidence and the confessions are so circumstantial that to reject both as hocus-pocus would be to reduce the trial almost to complete unintelligibility' (*News Chronicle*, 25 August 1936). The Moscow correspondent of the *Observer* also wrote (23 August 1936) that 'It is futile to think that the trial was staged and the charges trumped up. The Government's case against the defendants is genuine'. Sir Bernard Pares (*Spectator*, 18 September 1936) likewise expressed the view that,

> As to the trial generally, I was in Moscow while it was in progress and followed the daily reports in the Press. Since then I have made a careful study of the verbatim report. Having done that I must give it as my considered judgment that if the report had been issued in a country (that is other than the USSR) without any of the antecedents I have referred to, the trial would be regarded as one which could not fail to carry conviction. . . . The examination of the sixteen accused by the State Prosecutor is a close work of dispassionate reasoning, in which, in spite of some denials and more evasions, the guilt of the accused is completely brought home.

These statements were made use of by the Anglo-Russian Parliamentary Committee in presenting to the public its summarised version of the official report (itself not verbatim) of the first Moscow trial. Its account of the second trial (compiled by W. P. and Zelda K. Coates) was introduced by Neil Maclean, M.P., with a preface by the Moscow correspondent of the *Daily Herald*, R. T. Miller, and contained two speeches by Stalin, 'in that simple and clear style of which Mr Stalin is such a master', as Maclean put it. Maclean in his introductory foreword asserted that

> practically every foreign correspondent present at the trial with the exception, of course, of the Japanese and German—have expressed themselves as very much impressed by the weight of evidence presented by the prosecution and the sincerity of the confessions of the accused.

In the course of his preface Miller wrote that, 'The prisoners appeared healthy, well-fed, well-dressed and unintimidated'; that, 'Mr Dudley Collard, the English barrister . . . considered it perfectly sound from the legal point of view'; and that the accused 'confessed because the State's collection of evidence forced them to. No other explanation fits the facts'.[1]

[1] A member of the Fabian Society, Mr Collard performed the same service for the second Moscow trial as Pritt had done for the first (see D. Collard, *Soviet Justice and the Trial of Radek*, 1937). In 1936 he sent from Moscow a long telegram of

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Leaving aside Mr Collard, whose well-known political sympathies might explain his easy acceptance of surface appearances, it is clear that none of these commentators had the slightest understanding of the political struggle raging in the Soviet Union; a struggle of which these trials and those that had preceded them from 1928 onwards (which these gentlemen had apparently totally forgotten) were a reflection. Nor could any of them have really made a serious study of the official report. The circumstances of the time made many politically conscious people desire above all to think the best of the Soviet Government, and the views quoted above, deriving in part from this very desire, in part from sheer ignorance, were very welcome to the stalinists. If they did not wholly convince, they at least helped to lull suspicion.

THE most outstanding and the most influential supporter of the stalinist campaign in the country was D. N. Pritt, an M.P., a K.C., and formerly president of the enquiry set up to investigate the proceedings of the Reichstag fire trial. Pritt entered the campaign with an article in the *News Chronicle* (27 August 1936), later reprinted in pamphlet form, 'The Moscow Trial was Fair' (with additional material by Pat Sloan). He then expanded his analysis and argument in a booklet of 39 pages entitled *The Zinoviev Trial* (Gollancz, 1936). In this he first of all suggests that the bulk of the criticism of the trial emanated from the extreme right-wing opponents of the Soviet Government. Still, he admits that much of it was made in good faith and came from 'newspapers and individuals of very high reputation for fairness'. However, he goes on to imply that these critics had not, as he had, really studied the whole of the available evidence, but had relied upon incomplete reports. Moreover, they had not his advantage of being an eyewitness of the trial and a lawyer into the bargain. Having established in the reader's mind that all criticism coming from sources hostile to the Soviet regime is ipso facto baseless, and having made plain his own geographical and professional superiority to the 'fair-minded' critics, he argues that

> It should be realised at the outset, of course, that the critics who refuse to believe that Zinoviev and Kamenev could possibly have conspired to murder Kirov, Stalin, Voroshilov, and others, even when they say themselves that they did, are in a grave logical difficulty. For if they thus dismiss the whole case for the prosecution as a 'frame-up', it follows inescapably that Stalin and a substantial number of other high officials, including presumably the judges and the prosecutor, were themselves guilty of a foul conspiracy to procure the judicial murder of Zinoviev, Kamenev and a fair number of other persons (pp. 3–4).

protest against the appeal for mercy addressed to the court by Adler and Citrine. Yet in the *New Statesman* of 6 February 1937 he stated that 'English newspaper reports of previous trials induced in me certain misgivings as to the genuineness of the charges'.

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The most general and important criticism of the trial, Pritt says, is that it was impossible to believe that 'men should confess openly and fully to crimes of the gravity of those in question here' (p. 5). In fact, of course, the critics' difficulty was not to believe that 'men' should confess to 'grave crimes', but that these particular men should confess in that particular manner to crimes so contrary to everything known of their very public political pasts, so contrary to their known political philosophy, and so manifestly incapable of achieving their alleged objectives. For among those sixteen accused there were, as Khrushchev has now obliquely reminded us, 'prominent representatives of the old guard who, together with Lenin, founded the world's first proletarian state' (*Report on the Programme of the CPSU*; Soviet Booklet No. 81, 1961; p. 108). These were now transformed, in the words of the indictment, into 'unprincipled political adventurers and assassins striving at only one thing, namely, to make their way to power even through terrorism' (*Report of Court Proceedings: The Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre*; People's Commissariat of Justice of the USSR, Moscow, 1936, p. 18).

Pritt himself, however, does not appear to be wholly at ease about the lack of evidence adduced other than the confessions, for he suggests that the Soviet Government would have preferred all or most of the accused to have pleaded not guilty, for then the 'full strength of the case' would have been apparent. As it was, 'all the available proof did not require to be brought forward' (p. 9). He assumes the existence of this proof; he writes that we cannot possibly know 'what further facts there were in the record that were not adduced at all'. Not, that is, *whether* further facts were available, but *what* facts.

Although there is constant mention of facts, Pritt never gets down to a consideration of verifiable factual evidence adduced in alleged corroboration of the confessions. The closest he gets to giving an example of this is when he refers to an alleged conversation between two of the accused in which 'a highly incriminating phrase was used'. Each of the accused denied using it, but each said that the other had. Pritt found this highly significant. He does not explain why the accused should have shied at admitting the use of 'incriminating phrases' when they had already confessed to capital crimes.

Pritt claims to have reached his conclusion on the basis of a careful study of the official report of the trial. Surely, then, he must have been aware that, when it was not simply a question of 'incriminating phrases', conversations about conversations, but of concrete facts, some very glaring discrepancies were exposed, such as, for example, the flatly contradictory evidence of two of the accused, Olberg and Holtzmann, and the alleged meeting at a non-existent hotel.

It hardly seems possible that a man of Pritt's professional training could have failed to see that the whole structure of the confessions simply did not hang together. He did not even notice anything strange in the

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tale of those two desperadoes Fritz David and Berman-Yurin, who, after spending two and a half years preparing a plan to kill Stalin at the Congress of the Communist International, decided, when it came to the point, that they could not shoot because 'there were too many people'!

For Pritt 'anything in the nature of forced confessions is intrinsically impossible'; it was 'obvious to anyone who watched the proceedings in court that the confessions as made orally in court could not possibly have been concocted or rehearsed'; and not even the keenest critic had been able to find a false note (pp. 12–14). The picture he gives of himself is that of an utterly credulous bumpkin. Any reasonably objective student of Soviet politics must have been aware at the time that this trial and those that followed were frame-ups. It did not require Khrushchev to admit that 'thousands of absolutely innocent people perished. . . . Many party leaders, statesmen and military leaders lost their lives'; that 'they were "persuaded", persuaded in certain ways, that they were German, British or some other spies. And some of them "confessed"'. For the Moscow trials were all of a piece with those that had preceded them: the Shakhty trial in 1928; the Industrial Party trial in 1930; the Menshevik trial in 1931; and the Metro-Vickers trial in 1933.[2] No student of these trials would fail to see that they served a definite political purpose and that justice had been perverted to this end. The very occurrence, previous to the Moscow trials, of exactly similar confession trials—with all their 'technical' failures (attempted retraction of confessions; an accused going insane; long dead men named as conspirators, etc.)—should have been enough to raise doubts in the mind of the most prejudiced. But the supporters of Stalin clearly did not want to see the truth.[3]

HERE, as elsewhere, it was the paramount task of the Communist Party to 'sell' the trials. For this purpose, in addition to public meetings throughout the country and articles in the *Daily Worker* and other periodicals, a stream of pamphlets was published. The Moscow

[2] There were fifty-three accused at the 1928 trial—far too many for its proper staging. Right at the beginning it was announced that one, Nekrasov, had gone mad. Two other accused tried to withdraw their confessions during the course of the trial, giving a sickening glimpse of the preliminary investigation's 'rehearsal' horrors. At the next trial, in 1930, one Osadchy was brought into court under guard to give evidence as a member of the 'conspiracy'. Osadchy had been one of the State prosecutors in the 1928 trial. With each trial the staging 'improved', but in the very nature of such trials perfection was impossible. Even at their 'best' they could only deceive those suffering from what Ignazio Silone called the disease of juridical cretinism. It is worth noting that at the third Moscow trial the State Prosecutor, Vyshinsky, himself called attention to the connection between all these trials (*Report of the Court Proceedings in the case of the Anti-Soviet Bloc of Rights and Trotskyists*, Moscow, 1938, pp. 636–37).

[3] It is worth recording that Moscow University recently conferred on D. N. Pritt the honorary degree of Doctor of Law. During the ceremony Academician Ivan Petrovsky, Rector of the University, praised Pritt as an 'outstanding lawyer and selfless defender of the common people'.

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correspondent of the *Daily Worker*, W. G. Shepherd, wrote two pamphlets in 1936: *The Truth About the Murder of Kirov* (31 pp.), and *The Moscow Trial* (15 pp.). In 1937 two leading English communists, Harry Pollitt and R. Palme Dutt, wrote *The Truth about Trotskyism: The Moscow Trial* (36 pp.), and in 1938 R. Page Arnot and Tim Buck dealt with the third trial in *Fascist Agents Exposed* (22 pp.). Supplementing all this there were the so-called verbatim *Reports of the Court Proceedings* (published in English by the People's Commissariat of Justice of the USSR), and the abridged version of the official report of the August 1936 trial, published by the Anglo-Russian Parliamentary Committee. This does not, of course, exhaust the list of published matter issued directly or indirectly by the Communist Party in defence of the trials. Party contributors to the Left Book Club publications naturally also supported the campaign. In this respect J. P. Campbell's *Soviet Policy and its Critics* (Gollancz, 1938, 374 pp.) and *Soviet Democracy* (Gollancz, 1937, 288 pp.) by Pat Sloan, are notable.

The bulk of this material eschews any attempt at reasoning and concentrates on invective in the verbal knuckleduster style typical of the stalinist school. Campbell's book is a much more ambitious effort in that he admits knowledge of the Dewey Commission,[4] quotes from its proceedings, and also uses quotations from Trotsky's writings, albeit within strict limits. Thus he quotes Trotsky's words: 'Why, then, did the accused, after twenty-five, thirty, or more years of revolutionary work, agree to take upon themselves such monstrous and degrading accusations? How did the GPU achieve this? Why did not a single one of the accused cry out openly before the court against the frame-up? etc., etc. In the nature of the case I am not obliged to answer these questions'. Here Campbell stops and comments: 'But if there is no answer then a most important element in the case of the Soviet Government is upheld' (p. 252). He does not follow the quotation further, which runs: 'We could not here question Yagoda (he is now being questioned himself by Yezhov), or Yezhov, or Vyshinsky, or Stalin, or, above all, their victims, the majority of whom, indeed, have already been shot. That is why the Commission cannot fully uncover the inquisitorial technique of the Moscow trials. But the mainsprings are already apparent' (*The Case of Leon Trotsky*, pp. 482–83). A very striking illustration of the stalinist technique—low cunning, contempt for the truth, contempt for the reader's intelligence—is to be seen on page 213 of Campbell's book in his quotation from Trotsky's *The Soviet Union and the Fourth International*. He begins in the middle of a paragraph:

> The first social shock, external or internal, may throw the atomised Soviet society into civil war. The workers, having lost control over the state and economy, may resort to mass strikes as weapons of self-defence. The discipline of the dictatorship would be broken

[4] See *The Case of Leon Trotsky* and *Not Guilty* (Secker & Warburg, 1937 and 1938).

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> down [5] under the onslaught of the workers and because of the pressure of economic difficulties the trusts would be forced to disrupt the planned beginnings and enter into competition with one another. The dissolution of the regime would naturally be thrown over into the army. The socialist state would collapse, giving place to the capitalist regime, or, more correctly, to capitalist chaos.

And on this, Campbell writes: 'This was more than a prophecy. It was the objective of the conspirators'. The very next paragraph in Trotsky's essay begins: 'The Stalinist press, of course, will reprint our warning analysis as a counter-revolutionary prophecy, or even as the expressed "desire" of the Trotskyites'.

Campbell's book is a long diatribe against 'trotskyism' and of its 374 pages there is hardly one on which the name Trotsky does not appear. Since this was written after the third Moscow trial, he has caught up with the Soviet scenario, successively developed with each trial. The crimes of the accused are now 'only a culminating point in the struggle which Trotsky and his followers have been waging against the Bolshevik party since 1903.'

One of the curiosities of this period is the book written by Maurice Edelman from the notes of a Peter Kleist, entitled *G.P.U. Justice* (1938).[6] According to Edelman, Kleist was 'by no means a communist'. Efforts to convey an impression of objectivity are evident. The book dispenses with the usual stalinist bludgeoning invective and affects a dispassionate, disengaged attitude, but its phraseology and tone are unmistakably pro-stalinist. The Soviet Union is a classless society; the GPU is simply a police force like any other (only superior, of course); it is a misconception to consider it a secret police; if you are innocent no one can make you guilty; talk of GPU torture is Polish fascist slander; he, Kleist, is treated considerately, without brutality, and, therefore, so is every other suspect. There are many little touches designed to bring out the humanity of Kleist's captors. The Lubyanka and Butyrki prisons are depicted as rest-homes, where lengthy discussions (reproduced apparently verbatim) permit stalinists to defend Stalin and trotskyites to expose themselves as avowed wreckers and saboteurs in collaboration with the White Guards. The book could obviously only have been written by someone with a very clear idea of the Party line, and at the same time someone anxious to appear non-partisan. The cloak of non-partisanship is worn pretty thin, however, by the author's efforts to defend and extol, not merely 'GPU justice', but almost every aspect of Soviet life, including the forced labour camps. Finally, in an appendix, 'Kleist on the Moscow Trials', all pretence of impartiality is dropped. There one reads: 'Why do they confess? was the typical journalistic question, and no one, except

[5] The original reads: 'The discipline of the dictatorship would be broken. Under the . . .' etc.

[6] Recommended in Philip Grierson's *Books on Soviet Russia, 1917–1942* (1943) as 'Sober and matter-of-fact narrative; an admirable corrective to more sensational writings' (p. 125).

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the communist papers, supplied the obvious answer: " Because they were guilty " ' (p. 211). In this section the stock stalinist arguments are put forward by Kleist himself and not, as in the main narrative, through the mouths of others.

To these arguments he adds one of his very own. It gives the appearance of having been inserted to show that in spite of his total agreement with the Party line, he is nevertheless by no means a communist. For he says that, the GPU having established the guilt of the accused, they were ' at this point quite conceivably offered remission of the death sentence '. This, he argues, would account ' for the fluency of the confession and for the calm with which the majority of the prisoners heard the sentence of death ' (p. 217). Apparently, Kleist regards this kind of double-crossing as a mark of the humanity of GPU justice.

His final sentence is worth noting:

> *In the years which have passed since this my release*, the bursting into flames of the Spanish-Fascist rebellion, the risings and intervention of the Nazis in Austria and the promise of intervention in Czechoslovakia, have convinced me that whatever bewilderment is felt outside the Soviet Union at the unearthing of these Fascist conspirators, Fascist conspiracy in conjunction with Trotskyist conspiracy does exist and that its extirpation, so far from endangering the USSR, marks another peril avoided (p. 218).

Leaving aside the peculiar logic of this passage, attention is drawn to the words emphasised. The book was published in 1938. Kleist was released in April 1937. Thus, no ' years ' could have passed since his release. The reader may work out for himself the chronology of the events to which he refers, all of which he says took place after his release.

THE verdict of the British press was in general unfavourable to the Moscow trials. Among the dailies the *Manchester Guardian* stood out as their sharpest critic. In addition to its own editorial comment, it published cables from Trotsky rebutting the evidence and attacking Stalin's policy, earning what is probably the rarest praise ever bestowed by a revolutionary on a ' bourgeois ' newspaper. ' I know full well ', Trotsky telegraphed from Mexico (25 January 1937), ' that the *Manchester Guardian* will be one of the first to serve the truth and humanity '. Typical of the *Manchester Guardian's* attitude was its statement of 28 August 1936: ' He [Stalin] surrounds himself with men of his own making [7] and devotes all the power of the State to removing those who, however remotely, might become rival centres of authority '.

[7] Among them, of course, N. Khrushchev, who, speaking from the roof of Lenin's tomb to a parade of two hundred thousand workers after the 1937 trial, said: ' By lifting their hands against Comrade Stalin they lifted them against everything that is best in humanity, because Stalin is the hope, Stalin is the expectation, Stalin is the lighthouse of all progressive humanity. Stalin, our banner! Stalin, our will! Stalin, our victory!' (*Daily Telegraph*, 1 February 1937).

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Nothing as bluntly condemnatory as this came, however, from *The Times*. Indeed, in 1936 and 1937, its attitude might justly be construed as favourable to Stalin. The trials, it thought, reflected the triumph of Stalin's 'nationalist' policy over that of the revolutionary die-hards. The conservative forces, with the overwhelming support of the nation, had now demonstrably gained the day. On this single point it was curiously at one with Trotsky himself, who wrote in an article in the *Sunday Express* (6 March 1938) that, 'From beginning to end his [Stalin's] programme was that of the formation of a bourgeois republic'. It was only with the 1938 trial that *The Times* expressed doubts as to the general trend of affairs in the Soviet Union. On balance one cannot say that *The Times* saw very clearly in this matter.[8]

The labour press was naturally in agreement with the views expressed by the Socialist International and the International Federation of Trade Unions (Louis de Brouckère and F. Adler on behalf of the LSI, and Sir W. Citrine and Walter Schevenels on behalf of the IFTU sent telegrams of protest on the occasion of each of the trials). Writing on the second trial in *Reynolds News* (7 February 1937), H. N. Brailsford said that it left him 'bewildered, doubtful, miserable'; pointed however to the confessions—'If they had been coerced, surely some of them . . . would have blurted out the truth'; referred then to the conflict of the evidence with known facts, and concluded: 'In one Judas among twelve apostles it is easy to believe. But when there are eleven Judases and only one loyal apostle, the Church is unlikely to thrive'. In the Scottish *Forward*, Emrys Hughes' witty, ironic articles bluntly exposed the trials as 'frame-ups'.

On the other hand, however, it was the communists alone who maintained a campaign consonant with their objectives. There can be little doubt that they did finally succeed in diverting the attention of left-wing opinion and those others whom they courted from the essential issues raised by the trials, and in persuading a very large body of public opinion that Stalin's policy was right.

In this task they received powerful support from the *New Statesman and Nation*, which reached an audience not in general susceptible to direct communist approach. This journal gave an exhibition of dithering evasiveness and moral obtuseness rarely displayed by a reputedly responsible publication. The 1936 trial, 'if one may trust the available reports, was wholly unconvincing' (28 August 1936). At the same time, 'we do not deny . . . that the confessions may have contained a substance of truth. We complain because, in the absence of independent witnesses, there is

[8] 'Stalin's policy of nationalism has been amply vindicated. Russia has made much industrial progress, social conditions are improving' (*The Times*, 20 August 1936). 'Today the Russian dictatorship stages what is evidently meant to be the most impressive and terrifying of its many exhibitions of despotic power . . . . The customary overture has already been played by the Soviet press . . . howling for the blood of those whom it denounces, in the grimly proleptic phrase, as "this Trotskyist carrion"' (*The Times*, 2 March 1938).

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no way of knowing. . . . When we hear that so close and trusted a friend of Stalin, as Radek, is suspected . . . we are compelled to wonder that there may not be more serious discontent in the Soviet Union than was generally believed' (5 September 1936).

An article on the second trial, 'Will Stalin Explain?' (30 January 1937), stated that 'the various parts of the plot do not seem to hang together'; but the confessions could not be doubted because that would mean doubting Soviet justice; on the other hand, 'to accept them as they stand is to draw a picture of a regime divided against itself'. If there was an escape from this dilemma, would Stalin please tell them what it was?

In the absence of any answer from Stalin to this complaint, the journal had to be, and apparently was, satisfied with matters as they stood. For after the verdict it asserted that, 'Few would now maintain that all or any of them were completely innocent' (6 February 1937). Reference is made to a letter from Mr Dudley Collard (the letter noted earlier in this article) and the comment made: 'If he is right, we may hope that the present round-up and the forthcoming trial will mean the final liquidation of "Trotskyism" in the USSR, or at least of the infamous projects to which that word is now applied'.

The third trial again demonstrated the *New Statesman and Nation's* remoteness from reality and indifference to the moral issues raised. 'The Soviet trial is undoubtedly very popular in the USSR. The exposure of Yagoda . . . pleases everyone and seems to explain a great deal of treachery and inefficiency in the past'; but 'the confessions remain baffling whether we regard them as true or false, and the prisoners as innocent or guilty. There has undoubtedly been much plotting in the USSR'.

True or false; innocent or guilty; one could take one's choice—what was important was that the confessions were baffling. Even more baffling the mental processes by which an otherwise humane and intelligent man could write in a manner at once so callous and so superficial.

This type of confusion and refusal to face facts dominated the thinking of many left-wing intellectuals and the left-wing of the labour movement during the thirties. The experience of the great Russian purge destroyed no illusions, taught them nothing. And even today it is doubtful if there is a full appreciation of the profound effect those events had on Russian society and the men who lead it.

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1939: WHITHER RUSSIA?

Trotsky and his Critics

Max Shachtman

WHAT distinguished Trotsky from all other opponents of the Stalinist regime was his theory that it represented a bureaucratically-degenerated workers' state.*

Why was it still a workers' state, even after the Opposition, representing the revolutionary proletariat, had in the late twenties been driven out of the ruling party and into prison and exile, even after the consolidation of an exclusive bureaucratic monopoly in the party and state? Because, first, there was still the possibility of defeating the bureaucracy by means of a vigorous but peaceful reform of the party. And, second, the principal means of production were still nationalised, in the hands of the state, and not yet converted into private capitalist property. While the bureaucracy had betrayed the principles of the revolution, it had not yet surrendered this vital material achievement—nationalised property—to bourgeois counter-revolution. The latter was moving rapidly forward under the regime of the bureaucracy, but it had not yet triumphed. In no circumstances should it be allowed to triumph. Therefore, whenever and wherever there was an attack by bourgeois forces on the Stalinist regime, which for all its degeneration remained a workers' state, it was the duty of the Trotskyists and workers throughout the world to stand up for the *unconditional defence of the Soviet Union.*

In sum: The Stalinist bureaucracy was paving the way for a counter-revolution in Russia. A timely victory of the Opposition would restore the state to Soviet democracy and internationalism. The vacillating, parasitic bureaucracy was not a serious alternative. The alternative was the victory of the counter-revolution. Its social content was bound to be the restoration of private property following the destruction of nationalised property. Proletariat and bourgeoisie were the only two basic and decisive classes. The issue would be joined and determined in open conflict between them; and that conflict was imminent. Up to that moment, even the degenerated Stalinist state must be defended against bourgeois attack. . . .

Banished from the territory of the Soviet Union by police decree at the end of 1928, Trotsky only intensified his war upon the Stalinists upon the basis of this doctrine, analysis and programme. He was now able for the first time to assemble and lead an international communist Opposition based entirely on his theory. But he soon found that he had to defend his theory almost as often and as vehemently from his partisans as from his enemies. From the time of his banishment until his tragic

* The historical roots of the theory of 'bureaucratic degeneration' are traced in Mr. Shachtman's recently published *The Bureaucratic Revolution*, and in Dr. Bahne's contribution to the present number of *Survey*.—*Ed.*

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death, there was hardly a year in the existence of the Trotskyist movement abroad or of its counterpart inside Russia (so long as it retained any sort of coherent and articulate form) that did not see a crisis that rent its ranks in disputes over Trotsky's views of the 'Russian question'. There was hardly a year of his last exile when Trotsky did not find himself obliged, by new developments or by reconsideration, to modify his theory, sometimes drastically, while trying to preserve its essentials. The last year of his life saw another crisis, occurring at the outbreak of the world war. His position on Russia was again challenged by his followers. In this last controversy he allowed for an amendment to his conceptions so far-reaching in its implications as to shatter the very basis of his theory, in particular the theory of his opposition to Stalinism.

EVEN before Trotsky was banished to Turkey, the process of disintegration of the Russian Opposition had begun and it continued at an accelerated pace. The Democratic Centralists—residue of a faction in the controversies of the early twenties which had joined with Trotsky and Zinoviev in the United Opposition Bloc of 1926—were the first to part with their allies. Led by old Bolshevik militants like Sapronov and Vladimir Smirnov, they took the view that the Thermidorian reaction—the counter-revolution—had already triumphed in Russia and that the workers' state was at an end. Relatively, this was a minor loss; graver ones soon followed.

In the middle of 1928, with all the Oppositionists already expelled, it became evident that a new struggle was developing among the anti-Trotskyist leaders, precipitated by a crisis in grain collections. Now the fight was between Stalin's followers and those led by Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsky. It was the prelude to what was to be called the 'Great Change' or 'Russia's Second Revolution'—the programme of massive industrialisation and forced collectivisation which was to be the decisive feature of Russia's development for the next three decades.

Trotsky, then in Asian exile, treated Stalin's turn with the greatest scepticism and reserve. Indeed, he sounded the alarm against the impending counter-revolution more vigorously than ever. Stalin, he wrote repeatedly in those days and for a long time afterward, had not adopted and could not adopt a Left course but only a 'Left zig-zag'. He represented only the bureaucratic apparatus vacillating under the pressure of real and effective classes. Tomorrow, the 'Right tail' would come crashing down on his head, because it represented the powerful restorationist and proprietor classes; and to them Stalin would capitulate. In a famous 1928 article, which was one of the pretexts for his expulsion from Russia, Trotsky insisted that the country was facing a 'dual power' situation, as it did in 1917 just before the Bolshevik victory, when Kerensky represented the state power of the bourgeoisie and the Soviets were the incipient socialist power. Only, this time, the 'film of October is unwinding in reverse'—that is, it was not the bourgeois element of the dual power that was about to be overturned by the socialist element,

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but exactly the other way around. Voroshilov was even mentioned as the possible 'man on horseback'—a counter-revolutionary Bonaparte.

As late as April 1931, even though the Right wing had already been crushed by Stalin, Trotsky still spoke of the 'dual power' in Russia and declared that the further degeneration of the party machine—Stalin's faction—'undoubtedly increases the chances of the Bonapartist form' of the overturn of the Soviet state, that is, 'the form of the naked sabre which is raised in the name of bourgeois property'. (To my knowledge, he never again referred to the 'dual power' in Stalinist Russia, or to the outcome of the contest between the two classes it was said to represent.)

This analysis was entirely in keeping with Trotsky's idea of expected developments, but it was almost equally out of keeping with the political and social reality. It could not and did not serve to retard the decline of the Opposition, upon which the Stalinist apparatus was in any case exerting an almost unbearable pressure. As it became clear that Stalin's course was not a 'zig-zag' but a sustained and resolute line, that the Bukharin faction was irretrievably defeated; that the propertied, semi-propertied and potentially-propertied people in the country were being economically (and even physically) annihilated, that a restorationist bourgeoisie was not within miles of a struggle for power (then or later)—the Zinovievist and then the Trotskyist Opposition collapsed. First, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and their friends capitulated to the regime. Then, of the Trotskyists, came the capitulation of Radek, Preobrazhensky, and Smilga. Then (this was an especially hard personal blow to Trotsky) Rakovsky; then, dozens upon dozens and finally hundreds of others. A tiny, dwindling minority remained steadfast, and none of these survived the blood purges of the Moscow Trials period—nor indeed did the capitulators.

In virtually every case—if we set aside exhaustion, apparatus pressure and the like—the political reason given was at bottom the same: The perspective of a rising bourgeois counter-revolution had proved to be false. If anything, Stalin was smashing the economic and political foundations of the bourgeois elements more ruthlessly than the Opposition had ever proposed to do. And his economic policy was not a momentary tactic but a durable line by which he was expanding and consolidating the basis of socialism. In this they had to work along with him.

This reasoning was not without its defects. It is true that even the soundest theoretical and political arguments would have been of little avail in holding together the Opposition in the extraordinary circumstances. It is true, too, that Trotsky's analysis, criticism, and predictions about the Stalinist course in a dozen vital fields of domestic and foreign policy were matchless and were confirmed by events.

But in the basic theory that the bourgeois counter-revolution and the restoration of capitalism were on the order of the day in Russia, that the destruction of the economic and political power of the workers under Stalin was bound to bring about this counter-revolution and this one alone, that the Stalinist bureaucracy could not effectively resist it but would

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only manure the soil from which it would surely arise—this theory found no confirmation at all.

Yet Trotsky reiterated the analysis and forecast in a dozen different ways in all his writings during the critical decade of the thirties, emphatically and without reservation. From a mind so luminous and penetrating, it is almost incomprehensible, unless we remember that it was a fixed point in Trotsky's doctrine: a workers' state can be destroyed and replaced only by a bourgeois state based on private property.

OUTSIDE Russia, the Trotskyist movement enjoyed far greater continuity and coherence, if only because it was free of the ruthless police pressures of the Kremlin. Trotsky never had to cope among his foreign supporters with the problem of capitulation to Stalinism or conciliation. Except for a few trivial individual cases, no such tendencies manifested themselves. But he was not free from the necessity of defending his views continually from doubts and challenges in his own ranks. It may be said that even those who accepted his theory, including the changes he introduced into it from time to time, did not always agree with the passionate enthusiasm and conviction they shared for his trenchant attacks upon the Stalinist regime and it policies. But Trotsky's prestige and authority in his movement were probably unequalled by the leader of any other branch of the radical movement. For most of his followers this sufficed to turn the balance against doubt, but not for all.

Barely settled in his Turkish exile, Trotsky was forced into a sharp struggle with a large part, if not the majority, of his adherents in Europe. In the Russo-Chinese conflict of 1929 over the Chinese Eastern Railway, in which Moscow held important rights inherited from Tsarist times, a military clash appeared possible. This raised the question, among the Trotskyists, of the validity of the policy of 'unconditional defence of the Soviet Union in wartime'. Many of them held that Moscow was displaying an imperialist attitude towards China and that revolutionists should not support it. Trotsky atacked them furiously. Russia was to be defended in spite of Stalin because it was still a workers' state. The ensuing debate ended in the first big split in the Trotskyist movement. Most of the Germans followed their chief, Hugo Urbahns, in separating from Trotsky. In France, most of the communist-syndicalists, around Fernand Loriot and Pierre Monatte, founders of the French Communist party and partisans of Trotsky as early as 1924, broke with him in the dispute. So did many who were in the Trotskyist group led by Maurice and Madeleine Paz. The split extended to Belgium, where Trotsky lost the allegiance of the group around Van Overstraeten, the former head of the Communist party and then of the Trotskyist opposition.

This split was a stiff blow. But under Trotsky's tireless hammering, the oppositional groups in Europe and the Americas, though they never became a political force, were re-united around his views. The union did not endure. It was breached, at first in a minor way, during the

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period of the Moscow Trials and the Spanish Civil War. Up to that time, Trotsky had defended his theory that Russia was still a workers' state on the ground that the workers retained the possibility of turning the political helm in Russia and bringing the bureaucracy under their control, without resorting to a revolution, by means of an internal reform of the ruling party. By 1936 he could no longer maintain this view, and abandoned it.

The bureaucracy had now, he argued, attained total political power. Indeed, in its *political* rule, it did not differ from the fascist bureaucracy in Germany. In fundamental distinction from the latter, however, it rested upon different social foundations, defined as nationalised property, which the Stalinist bureaucracy preserved 'in its own way', just as the Nazi bureaucracy preserved private property in its way. The Russian workers had been completely expropriated of all political rights and power. Because the 'way' in which the bureaucracy defended nationalised property was such as to bring closer the return of capitalism, the bureaucracy had to be removed from political dominance, which had reached such a totalitarian level that it could not be corrected by peaceful reforms. The bureaucracy could be overturned only by a revolution; but this revolution would not be a social revolution as it would not alter the prevailing property forms. It would be a 'political revolution'.

It is hardly necessary to dwell on the dimensions of the hole this thesis created in the wall of Trotsky's basic theory. Here it must suffice to refer to two reactions in the ranks of the Trotskyists. The vast majority in Europe and America accepted it out of hand, so to speak, with little reflection on its significance. Few recalled that only a little earlier Trotsky, both in exposition and in polemic, had insisted that Stalinist Russia was a workers' state precisely because, while the bourgeoisie needed a revolution against the regime in its interests, the working class could realise its interests by means of peaceful reform.

The other reaction was shown by those Troskyists, a very small and ineffectual minority, who rejected Trotsky's thesis. One of them was the young Frenchman Yvan Craipeau. In Russia, he wrote, the loss of all political power by the working class meant that it no longer ruled in any social sense, that Russia was no longer a workers' state, and that the bureaucracy had become a new exploiting and ruling class. Furthermore, this new class, by its military alliance with French imperialism (in the form of the Stalin-Laval Pact), and by its role in the Spanish Civil War (where the Stalinists opposed all steps towards a socialist revolution and proclaimed themselves defenders of private property), ruled out, for revolutionists, the policy of defence of Stalinist Russia in a war.

The other was an American Trotskyist leader, James Burnham, a somewhat unorthodox Marxist who was later to become more widely known in a different capacity. Leaning heavily on Trotsky's contention that the Russian working class had lost all trace of political power, Burnham argued that, though Russia was no longer a workers' state, it

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was not yet a bourgeois state. The bureaucracy was playing a reactionary role because it had 'definitely entered the road of the destruction of the planned and nationalised economy'. It expressed only the interests of those social groups that were 'now in the process of transformation of a new bourgeois ruling class'. However, since nationalised property still existed, the defence of Russia in war was the 'imperative and inescapable duty' of the proletariat. This was in 1937. It did not even foreshadow the altogether different position Burnham was to take later. Trotsky's response was moderate, for clearly Burnham did not differ too widely from his own view.

One element in Trotsky's reply is worth recalling, however, for the special light it throws on a later development. Although in a certain sense Hitler and Stalin both served the bourgeoisie, 'between the functions of Stalin and Hitler there is a difference. Hitler defends the bourgeois forms of property. Stalin adapts the interests of the bureaucracy to the proletarian forms of property. The same Stalin in Spain, that is, on the soil of a bourgeois regime, executes the function of Hitler'. It was thus shown again, concluded Trotsky, that the bureaucracy was not an independent class 'but the tool of classes'—a tool (a bad one) of the workers in Russia where state property prevailed, and a tool of the bourgeoisie outside Russia where private property existed.

The 1937 dispute was allowed to lapse. Neither Craipeau nor Burnham pressed his views further, and Trotsky seemed content to let it go at that. The new doctrine of the political revolution became official, and in 1938 Trotsky added an amendment that the revolution which was to restore the democracy of the Soviets would exclude the bureaucracy from participating in them.

TWO years later the war broke out, and the conflict over the 'Russian question' flared up more intensely than ever before. It proved to be the most bitter and most wracking of the internecine struggles of the Trotskyist movement, and the last one in which Trotsky was able to participate.

The theory of 'unconditional defence' of the 'workers' state' was given its crucial—indeed, its only concrete—political test with the firing of the first gun. The armies of Hitler and Stalin joined forces to conquer and subject Eastern Europe and to divide the spoils of victory. The annexation of the Baltic lands and parts of Poland and Finland was undoubtedly required for the defence of Stalinist Russia in much the same way as the subjugation of Korea and Manchuria were required by Imperial Japan. But what had such a course in common with socialist politics, asked a minority of the American Trotskyist leadership. Their answer to this question was: Nothing! Russia was now an integral part of an imperialist war, allied with a reactionary imperialist power, and pursuing with its ally an imperialist policy of conquest and oppression. Russia's invasion of Poland and Finland must be condemned, and the

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slogan of defence of Russia discarded. They did not advocate support of the Western coalition, which they characterised similarly as imperialist. The break with Trotsky's traditional policy was unmistakable and portentous.

The minority leaders included Martin Abern and Max Shachtman, two of the founders of American communism, and two of the three communist leaders who launched the Trotskyist movement in the United States in 1928. Shachtman founded the theoretical journal of the American Trotskyists and edited Trotsky's works in English. The third, James Burnham, although a later adherent to Trotskyism, was widely respected in its ranks. The three could not easily be dismissed as casual figures. The American organisation was by far the most stable, steadfast, and important branch of the international Trotskyist movement, and Trotsky could not let it depart from his position by default or negligible interventions. From Mexico, he plunged into the debate.

Although differing on the sociological question, the 'class character of the Russian state' (Abern believed that it was still a degenerated workers' state, Burnham had abandoned that view in 1937, and Shachtman was uncertain), which they agreed not to debate, the three were at one about the political question ('unconditional defence'). It was perfectly obvious that analysis of the theoretical question was in itself far from being decisive in determining policy towards the war.

Trotsky ignored the fact that it had only recently been just as obvious to him, and after starting out with a relatively mild article against the view of the minority, he launched a large-scale attack upon it. Drawing on his exceptional intellectual resources, which the minority could not match, and using his unrivalled gift for irony, he blanketed his opponents under a mounting drumfire of polemic. They stood firmly by their position even though Trotsky exploited its every weakness and gap, reassured by their conviction that he had not answered what was sound and rational in their rejection of 'defencism'.

A few weeks later, Trotsky expanded the range of his assault. He confronted the minority with questions ranging from the class nature of Russia to the logic of Aristotle and Hegel; from dialectical materialism down to the most trivial of internal organisational matters. He called into question the revolutionary probity of the minority leaders, their personal characteristics, and their records in the movement. They were denounced as a 'petty-bourgeois opposition' suffering from 'gangrene'. The political question, the only one posed by the minority, was all but lost in this universalised turbulence.

With this kind of intervention from Trotsky, his supporters retained control of the American organisation at the end of the dispute, but only by a narrow margin; the minority won the decisive majority of the young Trotskyists and almost half of the party membership as well. After the 1940 convention, the minority were expelled en bloc without trial, and the split was irrevocable. Abern, Shachtman, and their friends continued in a new organisation; Burnham, deeply shaken and repelled by the fight

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Trotsky had conducted, quit the movement entirely with a disavowal of Marxism in general, and soon moved to the position presented a year later in his *The Managerial Revolution.*

TROTSKY'S victory was as complete as it was dubious. From the vigour and intensity of his participation in the dispute, nobody could have imagined that he was at the same time in such despair about his personal condition that he was seriously contemplating taking his own life. Of this melancholy prospect there was not the slightest sign in his polemical writings.

Yet, oddly enough, it was neither the direct targets of these writings—his party opposition—nor the arguments levelled against them that were the most important aspect of the development of Trotsky's theory in this last period of his life. From this standpoint, the fight against his own opposition was of decidedly secondary, at most of auxiliary significance. Primary importance belongs instead to Trotsky's critical observations on a theory put forward by a non-participant in the dispute. This was a former Italian communist and ex-Trotskyist who, on the eve of the war, published a book in French, *La Bureaucratisation du Monde,* under the name of Bruno R.—Bruno Ricci.

Ricci rejected Trotsky's theory of the 'degenerated workers' state' and held that a new revolution was taking place throughout the world. It had brought, or was bringing, to power a new ruling class in a new social order, 'bureaucratic collectivism'. It was neither capitalist nor socialist in any significant sense. The working class is reduced to totalitarian slavery, exploited collectively by the new bureaucracy. The Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia and the fascist bureaucracy are equally representative of the supremacy of this new class and new social order. So too is the New Deal of Roosevelt, even if in a not yet equally advanced form. Thus, Ricci. Thus also a little later *The Managerial Revolution,* in which Burnham adopted Ricci's thesis virtually *in toto* and with the addition of some extravagant predictions.

Up to the appearance of Ricci's work, Trotsky defended his theory from those critics in or around his movement (except in the case of Craipeau) who held that the Russian state stood above the contending classes, or that it had become a bourgeois state, usually called 'state capitalism'. Hugo Urbahns, for example, put this label upon Stalinist Russia as well as upon fascist Italy and Germany. In Marxian terms and in terms of social realities this label was an absurdity. Trotsky had little difficulty in ridiculing and riddling this point of view, and more generally, in rejecting the identification of the Stalinist and Hitlerian *social* regimes despite the similarities of their *political* rule. Rudolph Hilferding, the eminent Austro-German socialist theoretician and economist, who in 1940 linked fascism and Stalinism in the same social category of 'totalitarian state economies', likewise gave short shrift to the theory of 'state capitalism'.

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A social order in which there is no capitalist class, no capitalist private property, no capitalist profit, no production of commodities for the market, no working class more or less free to sell its labour power on the open market—can be described as capitalist, no matter how modified by adjectives, only by arbitrary and meaningless definition. In any case, there was no capitalist anywhere in the world who would accept such a definition.

In Ricci's case Trotsky had a different problem. He did not hesitate to acknowledge the merits of Ricci's work, or to criticise what he called its mistakes. But in acknowledgment and criticism he managed to subvert the foundations of his own theory:

> Bruno R. in any case has the merit of seeking to transfer the question from the charmed circle of terminological copybook exercises to the plane of major historical generalisations. This makes it all the easier to disclose his mistake [he wrote on 25 September 1939]. Bruno R. has caught on to the fact that the tendencies of collectivisation [operating in all modern economy, in Russia, Germany or the United States] assume, as a result of the political prostration of the working class, the form of 'bureaucratic collectivism'. The phenomenon in itself is incontestable. But where are the limits, and what is its historical weight?

The answers given by Trotsky to these questions were little less than startling in view of the tenacity with which he had till then clung to his own theory of Stalinism and the arguments he had mustered in support of it. Three weeks later (18 October 1939), he wrote:

> Some comrades evidently were surprised that I spoke in my article ('The USSR in the War') of the system of 'bureaucratic collectivism' as a theoretical possibility. They discovered in this even a complete revision of Marxism. This is an apparent misunderstanding. The Marxist comprehension of historical necessity has nothing in common with fatalism. Socialism is not realisable 'by itself', but as a result of the struggle of living forces, classes and their parties. The proletariat's decisive advantage in this struggle resides in the fact that it represents historical progress, while the bourgeoisie incarnates reaction and decline. Precisely in this is the source of our conviction in victory. But we have full right to ask ourselves: What character will society take if the forces of reaction conquer?
>
> Marxists have formulated an incalculable number of times the alternative: either socialism or return to barbarism. After the Italian 'experience' we repeated thousands of times: either communism or fascism. The real passage to socialism cannot fail to appear incomparably more complicated, more heterogeneous, more contradictory than was foreseen in the general historical scheme. Marx spoke about the dictatorship of the proletariat and its future withering away but said nothing about bureaucratic degeneration of the dictatorship. We have observed and analysed for the first time in experience such a degeneration. Is this revision of Marxism? The march of events has succeeded in demonstrating that the delay of the socialist revolution engenders the indubitable phenomena of

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> barbarism—chronic unemployment, pauperisation of the petty bourgeoisie, fascism, finally wars of extermination which do not open up any new road. What social and political forms can the new 'barbarism' take, if we admit theoretically that mankind should not be able to elevate itself to socialism? We have the possibility of expressing ourselves on this subject more concretely than Marx. Fascism on one hand, degeneration of the Soviet state on the other, outline the social and political forms of neo-barbarism. An alternative of this kind—socialism or totalitarian servitude—has not only theoretical interest, but also enormous importance in agitation, because in its light the necessity for socialist revolution appears most graphically.

What 'some comrades evidently were surprised' at, and not without cause, was the view Trotsky had set down in his article of 25 September 1939. It is worth citing:

> Might we not place ourselves in a ludicrous position if we affixed to the Bonapartist oligarchy [the Stalinist régime] the nomenclature of a new ruling class just a few years or even a few months prior to its inglorious downfall? . . .
>
> The second imperialist war poses the unsolved task on a higher historical stage. It tests anew not only the stability of the existing regimes but also the ability of the proletariat to replace them. The results of this test will automatically have a decisive significance for our appraisal of the modern epoch as the epoch of proletarian revolution. If contrary to all probabilities the October revolution fails during the course of the present war, or immediately thereafter, to find its continuation in any of the advanced countries; and if, on the contrary, the proletariat is thrown back everywhere and on all fronts—then we shall have to pose the question of revising our conception of the present epoch and its driving forces. In that case it would be a question not of slapping a copybook label on the USSR or the Stalinist gang but of re-evaluating the world historical perspective for the next decades if not centuries: Have we entered the epoch of social revolution and socialist society, or on the contrary the epoch of the declining society of totalitarian bureaucracy?
>
> The twofold error of schematicists like Hugo Urbahns and Bruno R. consists, first, in that they proclaim this latter regime as having been already finally installed; second, in that they declare it a prolonged transitional state of society between capitalism and socialism. Yet it is absolutely self-evident that if the international proletariat, as a result of the experience of our entire epoch and the current war, proves incapable of becoming the master of society, this would signify the foundering of all hope for a socialist revolution, for it is impossible to expect any more favourable conditions for it; in any case no one foresees them now, or is able to characterise them.

WITH these pronouncements, Trotsky turned a corner in his thinking so abruptly as to bring him into violent collision with the main pillars of the theory of Stalinism he had long and stoutly upheld:

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1. The doctrine that Russia was still a workers' state because the bourgeoisie had not yet become the ruling class, was essentially exploded. It is possible for Russia (or other countries) to be ruled by a new exploiting class which is neither proletarian nor bourgeois.

2. The doctrine that the maintenance of nationalised property proved that the Stalinist regime was a workers' state, however degenerated, was similarly exploded. It is possible for nationalised property to be the economic foundation for the rule of a new class.

3. The conception of a new ruling class commanding a society which is neither capitalist nor socialist (a conception not long before derided by Trotsky) was not a revision of Marxism at all. 'Marxists have formulated an incalculable number of times the alternative: either socialism or return to barbarism.' And this conception does not of itself mean the end of socialism or the fight for it. 'An alternative of this kind [has] enormous importance in agitation, because in its light the necessity for socialist revolution appears most graphically.'

It is true, to be sure, that Trotsky endeavoured at the same time to reaffirm his old theory. It was no longer so easy. Having insisted that Russia remained a workers' state because the rule of the bourgeoisie had not been restored and nationalised property still prevailed, he now conceded that the workers' state could be utterly destroyed even if the bourgeoisie did not come to power and even if property remained nationalised.

The Russian state, he argued, remained proletarian *because* the Stalinist bureaucracy had no prospect of retaining control of it ('its inglorious downfall' might be a matter of 'a few years or even a few months', he said in 1939, almost a quarter of a century ago), whereas Trotskyists had the perspective that in all probability the October Revolution would 'find its continuation' in advanced countries 'during the course of the present war, or immediately thereafter'.

To determine the nature of a social order by appraising the prospects for political success of its upholders and its opponents, is extraordinary procedure for a Marxist. The two are closely related, but in exactly reverse order. The nature of cancer is not established by the success of medical science in finding the cure for it or the speed with which it is found. The nature of the atomic bomb is not determined by the use to which it is put, by the appalling consequences of its use, or by society's success in controlling or destroying it. Marx determined the class nature of capitalism by an analysis of its social anatomy, starting with the commodity. The validity (or invalidity) of this analysis is not to be determined by the conclusions he drew from it about the prospects for a socialist revolution in the Europe of 1848 or later.

By reducing the question of the nature of the Stalinist state to a matter of the prospects for success of the bureaucracy and of the socialist revolution in the period he indicated, Trotsky effectively abandoned the essential elements of the theory of the 'degenerated workers' state'.

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The course of the war undermined another of Trotsky's doctrines and drove him to another radical revision. Before the war, he had unremittingly attacked Stalinism for its theory of 'socialism in one country'. This theory was, to him, the central axis of the bureaucracy's thought, from which it derived, or with which were inseparably connected, all its errors, crimes, and betrayals of the revolution. If, on Russian soil, it might still play a positive role in so far as it maintained or defended state property, abroad it played an unequivocally reactionary role in that it defended capitalist private property. In Spain, as has already been noted, 'i.e., on the soil of a bourgeois regime, [Stalin] executes the function of Hitler', wrote Trotsky only two years before the war.

In the first months of the war, it should have been clear, this analysis of Stalinism proved completely indefensible. And it was clear enough to Trotsky to end any attempt to defend it. 'On the soil of a bourgeois regime'—that is, the part of Poland which was occupied by the Russian army at the start of the war—Stalin did not 'execute the function of Hitler' within the meaning of Trotsky's phrase. Instead, he destroyed the power of bourgeois and landowner, abolished private property, and set up the same economic-political-social regime as the Russian. It was an inconvenient turn of events. Given the theory he would not disavow, Trotsky had no choice but to acknowledge that Stalin's course in Poland (as later in the Baltic lands) was 'revolutionary in character—"the expropriation of the expropriators" . . . that the statification of property in the occupied territories is in itself a progressive measure'. This acknowledgment placed Trotsky squarely in the centre of a dilemma from which he was not allowed the time to extricate himself. A few weeks after acknowledging the basic social changes introduced in Poland by Stalin, Trotsky introduced a new modification of his theory. 'Some voices cry out: If we continue to recognise the USSR as a workers' state, we will have to establish a new category: the counter-revolutionary workers' state.' Well, why not? he continued in an article on 18 October. The trade unions of France and Britain and the United States were counter-revolutionary since 'they support completely the counter-revolutionary politics of their bourgeoisie. . . . Why is it impossible to employ the same method with the counter-revolutionary workers' state?'

The 'new category' did not alleviate his position. The term 'counter-revolutionary' had been applied to the reformist unions in the West precisely because they 'defended private property' and refused to 'expropriate the expropriators'. The 'counter-revolutionary workers' state', however, was now acting in Poland in an exactly and fundamentally opposite sense by carrying out measures that were 'revolutionary in character—"the expropriation of the expropriators"'. The dimensions of this 'revolutionary expropriation' could not be known to Trotsky. Only after his death were they extended far beyond Poland, nowhere under the auspices of the proletariat, everywhere under the aegis, direction and control of the 'counter-revolutionary workers' state'.

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Yet he saw enough in 1939, and wrote enough, to indicate that his central indictment of Stalinism for its theory of 'socialism in one country' was no longer relevant. The bureaucracy was showing that while it remained 'counter-revolutionary', it could and would carry out a fundamental revolution against the bourgeoisie abroad, but without the working class and against the workers; indeed, in Trotsky's own words, in order to convert them into its own semi-slaves.

The counter-revolutionary proletarian revolution against the bourgeoisie *and* the working class was a concept which not even the much-burdened dialectic could sustain. It was too much for the back of a theory which held that a regime under which workers and peasants enjoyed not a shred of economic or political power but were pitilessly exploited, was nevertheless a workers' state because it was not a bourgeois state.

The unique nature of Stalinist society, of its ruling class and of its social relations, and its true international significance both for capitalist society and for socialism—on these crucial problems of our time Trotsky found and offered promising clues to an understanding in the last polemical fight of his life. The assassin's axe soon ended all chance of his pursuing the clues to their end.

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THE LITERATURE OF DISENCHANTMENT

K. A. Jelenski

IN studying the reasons why Western intellectuals were attracted to Soviet communism and the reasons which made so many of them break with communism, what is striking is that the part played by marxist theory is practically insignificant. Serious Western Marxists soon rallied to the Trotskyist or social-democratic opposition, and even those who remained in the Communist party, like Gramsci, Ernst Bloch, or Georg Lukacs, often stood on the brink of heresy, until their death, enforced silence, or voluntary exile. Communism appealed to people for moral or psychological, not for philosophic reasons. In *Stalin's Russia and the Crisis in Socialism,* Max Eastman proposes a fairly satisfactory division of people attracted towards communism into three main groups: 'first, the rebels against tyranny and oppression, in whose motivation the concept of human freedom formed the axis; second, those yearning with a mixture of religious mysticism and animal gregariousness for human solidarity—the united-brotherhood pattern; third, those anxious about efficiency and intelligent organisation—a cerebral anxiety capable of rising in times of crisis to a veritable passion for a plan. The anti-war motive entered, with different colour, into all three patterns. And each of them usually contained as a subordinate factor the motive that was central in the other two.'

The Western intellectuals who manifested an immediate and enthusiastic solidarity with the Russian revolution at its very outbreak were relatively few. But all of them—John Reed, Ignazio Silone, Max Eastman—certainly belonged to the first category; they were actuated by the libertarian motive of freedom and justice. Silone wrote: 'In every Marxist worker the strongest basis for his socialist faith is the sentiment of justice.' And Max Eastman: 'In those who built the Marxian movement, and those who organised its victory in Russia, that act of emancipation was the central motive. They were, as some are prone now to forget, extreme rebels against oppression.'

On the other hand, one is struck by the large number of left-wing intellectuals who remained indifferent to the Russian revolution in its initial stages, while it still held the promise of establishing a workers' and peasants' republic, while it still could be identified with a vision of universal freedom, and who rallied to the 'defence of the USSR' only later, when an objective observer could already detect the anti-libertarian consequences of totalitarian party-rule, the anti-universal aspects of 'socialism in one country'. This can only be explained by the fact that Maxim Gorky, Romain Rolland, André Gide, Malcolm Cowley were more sensitive to the 'human solidarity-united brotherhood' aspect of

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the revolution than to its libertarian implications; that Sidney and Beatrice Webb, John Dewey, or Harold Laski were actuated by their desire for 'efficiency and intelligent organisation'. There is, of course, a further 'marxist' explanation of these belated conversions. For many bourgeois intellectuals of the West, however 'leftist' their ideological position, the Russian revolution of 1917, in its universal aspects, represented a direct threat to their own class privileges, to which at an unconscious level they continued to cling. Once it became clear that the revolution remained localised in distant Russia, once the slogan of 'socialism in one country' was launched, it became quite safe, even for millionaires like Nancy Cunard, to reconcile a revolutionary day-dream with their privileged existence.

This diversity of moral and psychological motivations of the adhesion of Western intellectuals to the revolutionary creed allows us also to understand better the extremely varied character of the contrary process of disillusion which the more honest, or the more sensitive, or the more proud among them experienced sooner or later.

In his contribution to *The God that Failed*, Louis Fischer describes how the ruthless repression in March 1921 of the Kronstadt sailors—former heroes of the revolution—opened the eyes of Alexander Berkman to the real character of Leninism. And he goes on to use 'Kronstadt' in a symbolic sense, to describe the particular event which suddenly breaks the affective solidarity of the communist or the fellow-traveller with the Communist party and with the USSR. There have been, in that sense, many 'Kronstadts' which affected not only individuals but generations of communists: Trotsky's exile, the big famine, the Shakhty trial of 1928, Stalin's reactionary decrees in the field of education and women's rights, his restoration of privileges to the army and the bureaucracy, his return to nationalism, the big Moscow trials of 1936–38 and the subsequent purges, the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, the invasion of Finland, the excommunication of Tito, the Rajk and Slansky trials, the 'doctors' plot', right up to the last 'Kronstadt' on a big scale—the repression of the Hungarian revolution. There have also been, more recently, 'Kronstadts à rebours': Khrushchev's secret speech and the XXII CPSU congress, which broke many affective ties with communism and the USSR not because they disclosed crimes hitherto unknown, but because for some people the fascination of communism consisted precisely in knowing about these crimes and keeping them secret in the name of 'historical necessity'.

IN a sense, the astonishing fact is not that many communists encountered their 'Kronstadt' so late, but that, once they accepted the basic fallacy of the system, they were liable to be discouraged at all. The psychology of belief is familiar with the process of justification, by the believer, of his creed, religious or political, in spite of facts which would apparently seem irreconcilable with it. But this process of self-justification acquires, in communists, an exceptional coherence, since the

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particularity of communism is to reject all moral or intellectual absolutes. Communism is, in the final resort, a belief in an historical process which carries humanity towards a classless society. The party is the driving force of this process, it alone is capable of accomplishing the final aim. As long as this basic conception is fully endorsed, as long as the absolute value of the aim and the party's role in bringing it about is accepted, it is difficult to see why any crime, why any apparent treason to the revolutionary ethos here and now cannot be justified within the millennial framework of this philosophy. And, indeed, many communists or fellow-travellers continued to justify one 'Kronstadt' after another. The totalitarian character of the Soviet state was justified by 'capitalist encirclement'; the crimes, the deportations, the concentration camps and the purges were justified by the right of the 'proletariat' to use all available means, in the name of the absolute end; the falsification of history, the debasement of art, all the absurdities of *partiinost* were accepted and endorsed in the name of the necessary monolithism of the party. And, in fact, the break with communism has rarely had a logical character. In the whole literature of disillusion we have very few examples of men who have revolted against communism as soon as they discovered that the realities of Soviet Russia were the opposite of its theory. And those few instances concern people who never really grasped the basic tenets of the communist way of thinking: an anarchist like Emma Goldman, a sentimental puritan with libertarian nostalgia like André Gide. In nearly all other cases—Max Eastman, Victor Serge, Ignazio Silone, Boris Souvarine, Arthur Koestler, Manès Sperber, Louis Fischer—the process was long, similar to a mounting nausea which at least becomes so unbearable that the final break is sometimes occasioned by a minor incident. The characteristic process can be described as follows: the formal break occurs usually a certain time after the belief has, in fact, ceased to exist; and there is another time-lag between the formal break and the revaluation of past experience in new and objective terms. When Boris Souvarine wrote his monumental book, *Stalin*, he still considered himself a Leninist: long years were required before he traced the root of the evil to Lenin's conception of democratic centralism.

We have many testimonials showing how the believer refuses to draw conclusions from undeniable facts in order to safeguard his belief. An interesting illustration of this is the description of the 'Shakhty Sabotage Trial' in 1928 by two eye-witnesses: Eugene Lyons and Louis Fischer. Both of them were evidently uneasy about the self-debasing confessions of the accused, about Krylenko's bulldozing prosecution, about the many incongruities. But what shattered them both was the deposition of a certain Mukhin. This is Eugene Lyons' version:

'The trial's impresario had committed the greatest blunder in dragging this harried creature from the gloom of his cell into the floodlights of public attention. In the first place, Mukhin was too clearly intimidated and anguished. In the second place, he stood as living proof that others—God knows how many scores or hundreds—were in

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the custody of the GPU on similar charges, though they were not in the prisoners' dock. Krylenko had blundered. . . . Another lightning flash disclosing a little of the background which, more than the trial itself, held men's thoughts.' The Shakhty trial provokes in Lyons 'exhausting currents of self-searching': 'I had proceeded on the assumption that the revolution can do no wrong, since even its crimes are justified by its mystical mandate from History. Something in the weeks of trial, I could not place my finger on it yet, challenged that mystical assumption.' He arrived at the conclusion that: (1) The trial was 'largely a figment of the stage-craft of the Soviet rulers'; (2) 'Behind the trial was a story of mass arrests, forced confessions, unprincipled and inhuman third-degree methods'; (3) Through this trial, 'a group intoxicated by untrammelled power showed off its new strength'. But the time was not ripe yet for a break: 'I record that these were my inner conclusions—writes Lyons—conclusions some of which I buried far out of sight, because they would have inhibited me in serving the revolution. I shouted down similar conclusions when they were voiced by Russian or non-Russian acquaintances.'

Louis Fischer gives a parallel, equally striking version of the trial, and he too places the limelight on Mukhin's deposition. But he too confesses: 'I noted these phenomena, but did not understand that they marked the beginning of a decadence which has ended in the great lie and in the great silence of today.'

The time-lag between the actual loss of faith and the formal break has another aspect. The most stubborn communist illusion is that the only way of influencing the party is from inside. However strong the feeling of revolt, the 'logical' attitude commands them to bide their time, to await within the party the final victory of the revolution on the world scale, hoping to be able to influence its course when a workers' democracy replaces the dictatorship of the proletariat. Arthur Koestler had lost all illusions about the realities of communism and the Soviet Union by 1934: he did not leave the party until 1938. In Ignazio Silone's case, the time-lag was even longer: from 1924 to 1931. And even Max Eastman, a Marxist, but not a Communist party member, waited two years before he resolved to tell the truth about Russia.

IGNAZIO SILONE once jokingly said to Togliatti: 'The final struggle will be between communists and ex-communists.' It is significant that, even as a joke, this saying has lost much of its actuality since many of the revelations about the realities of the Stalinist tyranny have been confirmed by the Soviet rulers themselves. But if there will be no 'final' struggle, the *real* struggle, the essential dialogue did take place, until 1956, between communists and ex-communists, between the upholders of the total lie and the few people who were in a position to unmask, not only the lie, but its very mechanism. Communists never really feared criticism from the right or from the democratic left. But they could not bear to be demystified and exposed by those who knew

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them really well. And this—their inside knowledge not only of the realities of Soviet life, but of the way the communist mind works—was the essential contribution of the 'disillusioned' writers. They were conscious of this. In his introduction to *The God that Failed*, Richard Crossman quotes Arthur Koestler telling him how English socialists, with their detached anti-communism, are deaf to the Cassandra cries of ex-communists: 'But in the end, in your camp—said Koestler—we, ex-communists, are the only ones to speak with real knowledge of the problem.' When Max Eastman began his illuminating explanation of the mechanism of the Moscow trials, he wrote: 'My understanding is so bound up with my personal experience of the mentality of the consecrated Bolshevik, that I find it difficult to explain to Western minds.' The men who were able and wanted to reveal the true character of Stalinism met with incomprehension both on the left and on the right. On the many left-wing intellectuals who had tied their hopes to the Russian revolution, the hold of the Soviet myth is well known and understandable. But people who had been repelled by the revolution itself had difficulties of their own in understanding the working of the Soviet system. Max Eastman points out, for instance, that many anti-communists were taken in by the Moscow trials: 'I think that some liberals gave credence to these fantastic tales because they still imagine there is something in the nature of "Bolshevism" which explains or mitigates such acts of depravity.' And he adds: 'The acts are criminal, bestial and degenerate from every standpoint, but they are worse, if possible, from the standpoint of Bolshevism than from that of ordinary sanity or morality.' The development of Stalinism gave rise—particularly during the war—to a new phenomenon—that of 'right-wing fellow-travellers'. These people were not motivated by the identification of Soviet Russia with the revolutionary myth; they were attracted by the outright reactionary features of Stalinism—the 'patriotic war', the exaltation of Tsars and reactionary generals, the restoration of army hierarchy, the truce with religion. Many conservative magnates and generals, Anglican deans and Catholic abbés discovered with delight that the USSR was more nationalist and 'orderly' than their own countries and fell for the 'Eternal Russia' theory favoured by the discovery of Custine by American diplomats. In doing so, they completely lost track of the complex relationship between ideology and reality in Soviet Russia and of the essential characteristics of totalitarian dictatorship.

As early as 1924, after the publication in England of her book *My Disillusionment in Russia*, Emma Goldman describes—in a letter to Alexander Berkman—a situation which all active ex-communists were to face for years to come: 'Bolshevism has gotten under the skin of advanced people and . . . they are loath to do anything against it, while those who have not been infected with the poison belong to the reactionary gang with whom one cannot affiliate.' One still remembers the holy horror which the very names of Silone, Orwell, Koestler used to provoke in Stalinists and their fellow-travellers.

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THE literature of disenchantment cannot be reduced to a common denominator. There are, in the first place, straightforward testimonies, accounts of eye-witnesses like *My Disillusionment in Soviet Russia* by Emma Goldman, *I was a Soviet worker* by Andrew Smith, *Proletarian Journey* by Fred E. Beal, *Assignment in Utopia* by Eugene Lyons, *The Witches' Sabbath* by Alex Weissberg, Gide's *Return from the USSR* fall into this category, although the impact of Gide's book was due more to his prestige as a writer than to what he wrote. There are essays, political and historical, like Boris Souvarine's *Stalin*, Max Eastman's *Stalin's Russia*, Victor Serge's *Russia Twenty Years After*. There are, finally, works of fiction. Some of them—the novels of Ignazio Silone and Manès Sperber, Victor Serge's short stories—are concerned with the moral and psychological dilemma of the revolutionary who sees the revolution betrayed from within. But others—and in particular the works of George Orwell and Arthur Koestler—have contributed more to revealing the essential features of Stalinism than any testimony or essay. The revolutionary myth was so strong and the identification of the Soviet Union with this myth so complete, that plain facts and objective analysis had no power over it. The merit of Orwell and Koestler was not only to understand the essential particularities of Stalinism, but to isolate them from their context of ordinary human motivations, historical sedimentation, from whatever there remained of 'normal' features in Soviet life. They countered an abstract utopian vision based on false assumptions by an equally abstract apocalyptic vision based on a partial, but essentially true analysis. They did not destroy the 'sacred' character of the Soviet myth. They understood the magnetic attraction exerted by the Soviet Union, but they explained its siren's voice in terms of the Gorgon's head. Orwell's *Animal Farm*, with its slogan 'All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others', probably did more to make Western public opinion *feel* the unique Stalinist combination of equalitarian myth and new privileges than any historical or sociological explanation. Similarly, the peculiarities of Soviet semantics and of the way in which Stalinism managed to control to a certain extent even the intimate thoughts of its subjects, were only understood by 'experts' until the illuminating symbols of 'newspeak' and 'doublethink' made a wide reading public conscious of these new phenomena.

The difference between the effectiveness of an objective and incisive analysis by an honest 'expert' and a far more abstract, but also more striking version of the same facts given by a great imaginative writer is nowhere so clear as in connection with the meaning of the Moscow trials. It seems almost unbelievable today, but the Soviet hoax had a massive success at the time, even among free and advanced intellectuals. No matter how surrealistically the trials were conducted, many people in the West could not bring themselves to believe that men of sound mind could, in the face of death, confess to crimes they did not commit. We owe it to Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* that the essential dialectics of the purges

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were finally understood in the West. But we know now that, by stressing a real aspect of the Moscow confessions, the most interesting one, and the most difficult to understand for a non-communist—that of the final sacrifice not merely of life, but of human dignity for the sake of the party—Koestler conferred on these confessions a sinister dignity which they did not altogether possess. It is a far cry from the Rubashov version to Khrushchev's story of those quiet *dachas* promised to some of the accused if they confessed their imaginary crimes, to which he added, with somewhat sinister humour: 'The *dachas* were under the earth.' But when Max Eastman, in *Stalin's Russia*, published several years before *Darkness at Noon*, gave his own version of the trials, much closer to historical truth such as we see it now (and he did not omit the Rubashov element in them), his analysis was not striking enough to capture the Western imagination: it remained one of the many interpretations of Stalinism. It is worth noting here that while *Darkness at Noon* revealed a terrifying aspect of the communist technique, that aspect was presented with such grandeur that it did not repel all readers. Many young French intellectuals confessed later that they became communists after reading Koestler's book. This is not as strange as it might seem. The Western left-wing intellectual has long suffered from a complex of defeat, and from a feeling of inferiority towards the man of action. Throughout the 19th century, all revolutionary movements had been defeated, and the Bolsheviks were the first to achieve and stabilise their success. This gave them an incomparable authority in the eyes of the left-wing intelligentsia, who forgot to enquire whether this success was not achieved through the sacrifice of the very values in the name of which the revolution was made.

NOWHERE—and never—had the Stalinist hold on intellectuals been as powerful as in France between the liberation and the early fifties. A closer look at this period can help us to understand better the peculiar dialectics of intoxication and disillusion.

The French intelligentsia considered the communists in 1944 as the heroes and martyrs of the Resistance: they were 'Le Parti des Fusillés'. Issuing from the Resistance movement and dominated from the very beginning by Aragon and Elsa Triolet, the Comité National des Ecrivains grouped all left-wing and liberal writers. Some pre-war fellow-travellers who had been repelled by Stalinism at the time of the Moscow purges or the Nazi-Soviet pact were following the lead again; thus the monthly journal *Europe* was reconstituted with Jean Cassou, Georges Friedmann, Martin-Chauffier on the board. The pre-war revolutionary intellectuals, Malraux, Camus, Naville, Rousset, were neutral if not sympathetic. Sartre was the only major intellectual figure to engage at that time in some direct polemics with the communists, but he limited himself to abstract subjects such as Materialism. The communist intelligentsia itself did not lack talent. Aragon's prestige remained great, if ambiguous; among other leading poets, Eluard was a party member,

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René Char and Francis Ponge close sympathisers; Claude Roy and Roger Vailland were precious recruits from the middle generation and among the youngest there were brilliant minds like Edgar Morin, Jean Duvignaud, Antelme, Mascolo.

The post-war discovery of Hegel and the young Marx by French philosophers carried the fascination with History and Dialectics into the Sorbonne itself. While Sartre and Merleau-Ponty are the best known among them, the more esoteric prestige of Kojeva, Lucien Goldmann, Georges Bataille was great in Saint-Germain-des-Près circles. The French intellectual who was coming of age around 1945 naturally adopted a peculiar brand of 'existentialist Marxism'. Sartre's existentialism represented originally the lowest ebb of contemporary nihilism. His fascination with Stalinism and his desire to forge a positive *Weltanschauung* despite his view that the world has no objective significance (no 'essence'), that it is the opaque field of absurd existence, led him to construct the notion of 'engagement'. In an article published in 1946, Sartre explained why he refused to embrace the materialist creed: 'Fall on your knees, and you will believe, says Pascal. The position of the materialist is very close. If it was only that I had to fall on my knees, and if, through this sacrifice, I assured the happiness of men, I should doubtless agree. But there is more at stake: the renunciation, for all, of the right to free criticism, to truth. I am told all this will be given back to us later; but how can I believe a promise which is made in the name of principles which are self-destructive?' However, while Sartre rejected Pascal's intellectual abdication, the 'engagement' he proposed was a new form of Pascal's famous 'bet' on the existence of God: it postulated the 'progressive' or 'revolutionary' character of the Soviet Union.

The success of the term (and of the mental process it implied) was due to its perfect adequacy to the kind of problems the left-wing intellectual generation of the late forties had to face in its relationship with communism. In his *Ten Winters*, Franco Fortini explains how the communism of the twenties produced 'proletarian intellectuals'; that of the thirties 'revolutionary intellectuals', and how the 'engaged intellectuals' of the forties fitted into the new Stalinist framework. And Edgar Morin comments on that period, in his *Autocritique* (published in 1959): 'The notion of engagement was derived from military psychology, and intellectual Stalinism was, in fact, a military psychosis transferred to civilian life: all problems were put in terms of obedience and efficiency. Besides, engagement à la Sartre expressed an obscure aspiration to the disciplinary life of the Stalinist party, in which the torments of nihilistic conscience could be dissolved.'

The early intellectual alliances in post-war Paris seem amazing enough today. The first editorial committee of *Les Temps Modernes* grouped Raymond Aron, Jean Paulhan, and Sartre. And the Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire was founded in the spring of 1948 by Camus, Sartre, David Rousset, Gérard Rosenthal.

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But that was before the new revelations about Soviet concentration camps, Tito's excommunication by Stalin, and the Rajk trial produced—in 1948 and 1949—a new polarisation of the French Left.

THE debate concerning the existence of Soviet concentration camps was transferred from the obscurity of individual consciences to the limelight of court evidence by the two consecutive libel trials Kravchenko-*Lettres Françaises* and Rousset-Wurmser. It is characteristic that it was an old revolutionary like David Rousset, and a former communist militant like Albert Camus who reacted with indignation and vindicated truth, while Merleau-Ponty and Sartre remained prisoners of their 'engagement'. A recent article by Sartre ('Merleau-Ponty Vivant', *Les Temps Modernes,* special issue dedicated to Merleau-Ponty) is a striking, if involuntary, confession of intellectual failure.

In an unsigned editorial published by *Les Temps Modernes* in January 1950, Maurice Merleau-Ponty admitted the existence of forced labour in the USSR, but wrote: 'If the communists accept the camps and the oppression, it is because they await the classless society. . . . Never did a nazi embarrass himself with ideas such as the acknowledgment of man by man, internationalism, classless society. It is true that these ideas are not faithfully carried by today's communism . . . but they are still part of it. . . . We have the same values as a communist. . . . We may think that he compromises them by attaching them to today's communism. But they are our values and, on the other hand, we have nothing in common with many adversaries of communism. . . . The USSR is *grosso modo* on the side of the forces which fight against the forms of oppression we know.' After the publication of this article, Sartre received the following letter from Jean Bloch-Michel: 'How can you fail to understand that the Soviet economy needs slave labour-power and that it recruits systematically, every year, millions of underfed and over-exploited workers?'

'I showed this letter to Merleau-Ponty—Sartre wrote in 1961—who did not find it convincing; we found in it legitimate passion, reasons of the heart, but no Reason. If it had been better reasoned, reinforced by real facts, by arguments, might it not perhaps have carried our adhesion?' But what of the facts, what of the arguments of Eleanor Lipper and Margaret Buber-Neumann, of Alex Weissberg and Joseph Scholmer, what of the evidence published in 1949 by Rousset's International Committee against the Concentrationary Regime—all of which Sartre and Merleau-Ponty knew just as well as did Bloch-Michel?

The excommunication of Tito provoked the first serious rift among the post-war French communist intelligentsia. Jean Cassou, Clara Malraux, Jean Duvignaud were among the first French 'Titoists'. The Stalinist answers sound unbelievable today. Thus the memorable phrase of Courtade: 'When I say that Tito's regime is comparable to that of Franco, I am not playing with words. I can prove by Marxist analysis that the Yugoslav regime is a fascist regime.'

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The Rajk trial had a particularly strong echo in France, because a group of Hungarian communist intellectuals, press correspondents or cultural attachés, like Francois Fejto and Szekeres, who chose exile at that particular time, had close connections with French communist and left-wing intellectuals. An admirable article by Fejto in *Esprit* brought conclusive and irrefutable evidence of the real character of the trial. In his *Autocritique* Morin analyses an extremely curious phenomenon: even those communist intellectuals who had no doubts at all about the real nature of the Moscow trials of the thirties managed to convince themselves, against all evidence, common sense, and likelihood, of Rajk's and Kostov's 'guilt'. Esoteric interpretations no longer provided the necessary guarantees. In the later phase of Stalinism it was not enough to justify the crimes by 'historical necessity', it was not enough to justify the lies: one had to believe in them. A sophisticated, cynical communist like Courtade returns from Budapest convinced of Rajk's guilt; he manages to convey his certainty to such otherwise subtle minds as J.-F. Rolland or Claude Roy. The intellectual position of writers who could remain communists only in the framework of esoteric and sophisticated interpretations, became steadily more difficult. Its classical expression is given in that monument of intellectual subtlety, literary distinction, and downright absurdity which is Dionys Mascolo's book *Le Communisme,* published in 1952. In more than five hundred pages, Mascolo elaborates the final dilemma of his milieu: one cannot be anything else than Stalinist, but one cannot be a Stalinist. Or else: it is disgusting to be a Stalinist, but it is even more disgusting to be an anti-Stalinist.

No wonder the Khrushchev report burst like thunder on French communist and 'progressive' intellectuals. They tried to attenuate its impact by explaining that its argumentation was not 'Marxist'. The picture of a sanguinary, tyrannic, monstrous Stalin was not Marxist (they did not stop to explain why a deified, omniscient Stalin *was* Marxist), hence Stalin could have been neither monstrous nor sanguinary.

In France, more than anywhere else in the world, the final blow to the Stalinist myth was dealt from inside the Soviet bloc; and many young French intellectuals reacted as did Edgar Morin, who writes:

> For many Stalinists and progressives the Khrushchev report was a lesson, since it authenticated facts all the more incredible because they had been hitherto not so much ignored as denied as ignoble anti-Soviet calumnies. As for myself, I knew most of these facts. Not all of them. I could not have conceived of the genocide of minorities, the destruction of the Yiddish-speaking intelligentsia. I could not have conceived that torture could have become a systematic practice, decided by Stalin in a circular in 1938. All our interior dramas, all our meditations on *Darkness at Noon,* Merleau-Ponty's *Humanisme et Terreur,* became child-play. We were looking for sophisticated psychological and sociological interpretations; partly true, no doubt, but the essential truth was that men were tortured in their flesh.

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THE central debate on Stalinism, which lasted broadly from 1926 till after the death of the dictator, covered two sets of problems, the first concerning the real nature of the Soviet regime, the second its possible future development. These problems were connected, since even the full knowledge of concentration camps and purges did not really affect many people's judgment of the USSR, so long as they believed that it continued to embody revolutionary forces in their march towards the classless society. Western communists and fellow-travellers elaborated many versions of 'double-think' in this connection. The blind refusal to face any facts detrimental to the Soviet Union represented the most naïve version of it, characteristic of lower-grade militants and Left-Book-Club members. Stephen Spender gives an instance of it in his contribution to *The God that Failed*. He asked a group of communist writers whether they knew certain sinister facts of communist practice. 'If you ignore them', he said, 'if you deny them even among comrades, then I shall consider that I cannot take the responsibility of remaining in a party whose members do not know the acts it commits. On the other hand, if you admit them, while holding that they should be denied in public, I shall perhaps accept your point of view, which, at any rate, will seem serious to me.' Spender met with the blind refusal to admit the facts, which in this case might have been either a consequence of superstitious censure, or of the communist habit of lying even among themselves. The more sophisticated version of admitting the facts, while holding that they should not be divulged, was characteristic of many intellectual fellow-travellers. Its best-known manifestation was the Sartre-Camus polemic over the existence of forced labour in the USSR.

The Stalinist myth has crumbled, the embalmed mummy itself has left the mausoleum. The blind and naïve communists and fellow-travellers have learned from the horse's mouth that what they took for 'construction of socialism' was accomplished in conditions of unequalled terror, while the more sophisticated know by now that this terror was not an 'historical necessity', but a mere abuse of power.

It is only now that these communists have embarked on complex processes of revision which, in the end, add up to a vindication of what was already said by Goethe:

'Harmful truth is useful because it can be harmful only temporarily, and then leads to additional truths that must become more and more useful; and inversely, a useful error is harmful because it can only be useful momentarily, and then leads to other errors which become progressively more harmful.'

We owe tribute to men like Silone, Koestler, Sperber, to all the former communists who elected to speak up, to choose 'harmful truth' over 'useful error'.

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DEUTSCHER AS HISTORIAN AND PROPHET

Leopold Labedz

The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?
—*Jeremiah*, v. 31.

'ISAAC DEUTSCHER, the most eminent, accurate, and informative of all commentators on Soviet affairs. . . .' Thus the London *Tribune* (20 October 1961) in what is by no means an exceptional tribute to one who has been widely hailed as an analyst of Soviet affairs and highly complimented as a historian. John Dewey said that 'he has freed himself from the method of praise and blame and leaves the reader with understanding'; Bertrand Russell commended his 'historic impartiality'. The scope of the influence of Deutscher's ideas is astonishing. In the last two decades he has found a sympathetic hearing from markedly different political audiences ranging from left socialists to conservative Blimps. His articles have appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* and *The Times*, in *Corriere della Sera* and the *Washington Post*. He was published by the liberal *Observer* and the staunchly conservative *Sunday Times*, by the left-wing *l'Express* and the bourgeois *France-Soir*. The Catholic *Esprit* and Sartre's *Les Temps Modernes*, the anti-communist *Reporter* and the anti-anti-communist *New Statesman* had him as a regular contributor. The pillars of the British Establishment listened to him in 1956 explaining the historical ambivalence of the unprogressive Hungarian (counter-) revolution, and comrades Leduc and Pajetta, leaders of the French and Italian Communist Parties, heard him pontificating in 1961 on the necessary conditions for the unification of the socialist and communist parties, which he favoured. Neutralist statesmen from the underdeveloped countries, representing in Marxist terms the 'national bourgeoisie', repeated his arguments in and out of season, and so did the Trotskyist revolutionaries from *La Quatrième Internationale*, endorsing the Maoist line against the 'national bourgeoisie'.

Deutscher may, like other Marxist historians, be a prophet looking backwards, but he certainly has not been a prophet without honour. What are the reasons for his popularity? Were his prognostications right, as he constantly asserts? How accurate is he as a historian? Has he in fact, as a reviewer in the *Economist* declared, brought 'to the study of contemporary history a calm temper'? Deutscher has always said that he is politically engaged. At the opening meeting of the New Left Club in London he ended his speech with the call: 'Forward to the Red

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Sixties'. The dialectical (and political) feat of being at the same time *engagé* and *au-dessus de la mêlée* may look like an impossibility to ordinary mortals, but has not Deutscher claimed to follow the Olympian tradition of Goethe? [1] Or are all these proclamations no more than the thinly veiled rationalisations of a passionate ideologue, reflecting the far from calm temper of a frustrated politician?

To answer these questions is not enough for an understanding of the phenomenon of 'Deutscherism'; for this a wider examination is necessary, an analysis of the reasons why so many were inclined in the fifties to accept as gospel truth the ambivalences of their prophet. But it may be helpful to look at the roots of his beliefs, to scan his writings again, to check them against the facts, to examine more closely his method of handling the evidence, and to discover the relation between Deutscher's historical vision and his running commentaries on current political events. Only in this way can we fairly assess his claim to be in the tradition of Goethe, Shelley, and Jefferson which he invokes together with Marx's own patronage.

Personal Background

ISAAC DEUTSCHER was born in 1907 in an orthodox Jewish family in Poland. His grandfather and father were owners of a printing firm publishing Jewish religious literature; his uncle was a member of the Polish Upper House before the war, representing the Jewish clerical party, *Agudah*. As a boy Deutscher attended a rabbinical school and until he was in his late teens he wore the traditional Chassidic attire. He rebelled, however, against both school and home, left his *Yeshiva*, and put on ordinary clothes. Before that, he had started writing poetry in Polish and his translations of Hebrew poetry into Polish were read at the gatherings of the literary *avant-garde* at Cracow University where a Chassidic youngster writing poetry in Polish was something of an attraction. His poems were published in the Cracow Polish-language Jewish journal, *Nowy Dziennik*. Some had a Zionist character, but soon Deutscher became a socialist and hoped to be able to work for the socialist Cracow daily, *Naprzod*; but he gave up the idea and moved to Warsaw, where he became a communist and at the age of 19 joined the illegal Communist Party.

This was not an unusual evolution. Many other members of the Jewish intelligentsia looked to communism for a solution of the 'Jewish question' in a country where anti-semitism was endemic, where discrimination barred the way to a career, and poverty and obscurantism were rampant.

There were many paradoxes which the ironic Clio kept in store for the young talmudist-turned-dialectician. As things turned out, there was indeed a 'final solution' of the Jewish question in Poland: it came through the Nazi annihilation of over three million Jews; and after the

[1] Cf. *Heretics and Renegades* (London, 1955), p. 21.

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war, the communist ruling minority, top-heavy with the Jewish remnant (often concealing its ethnic origin), only helped to continue the traditional popular anti-semitism in a country from which the Jews had practically disappeared. Anti-semitism was without doubt the most important factor turning many Jews towards communism, but—to crown the irony—those among them who survived witnessed the persecution of the 'rootless cosmopolitans', when, in Tertz's phrase, 'anti-semitism was implemented in the name of internationalism'.

This was, however, in the future. Before Hitler took care of the 'Jewish problem' in Poland (and elsewhere), Stalin had in 1937 dissolved what the communist Jewish idealists regarded as the instrument of its real 'solution', the Polish Communist Party, and annihilated its leadership. By that time Deutscher had been long out of the party. He was expelled in 1932 for writing a series of articles criticising the party line in Germany (where the communists were busy attacking the 'social-fascists' of the SPD). Before his expulsion, Deutscher was secretary of the editorial board of the Yiddish communist literary monthly, *Literarische Tribune*, published legally (his articles there appeared under the pen-name 'Krakowski').[2] After leaving the party, Deutscher collaborated with a small Trotskyist group which published some anti-Stalinist pamphlets. In 1934 the members of the group joined either the Bund (Jewish Workers Party) or the PPS (Polish Socialist Party). Deutscher joined the latter. While in the Communist Party he was writing both in Yiddish and in Polish (in the legal communist monthly, *Miesiecznik Literacki*). He now started working in a modest capacity on the Jewish daily in Polish, *Nasz Przeglad*, published in Warsaw. This was a 'bourgeois' pro-Zionist paper and Deutscher stayed with it until 1939 when he left for England. There, after the outbreak of war, he joined the Polish army under General Sikorski. He was released from military duties in 1942 and was subsequently employed in the Polish Ministry of Information of the government-in-exile. Although he had published some articles in England earlier, it is from this time that his journalistic career in Great Britain begins, with regular contributions to the *Economist* and the *Observer*. Considering his linguistic handicaps, his technical achievement as a journalist was remarkable.

The Heretic and the Revolution

An assessment of Deutscher's views is impossible without taking into account his youthful traumas. His attachment to some illusions of his youth and his ambiguities are rooted in the earlier, little-known part of his biography. His pro-Soviet sympathies, his Trotskyist hagiography, his work for 'bourgeois' newspapers while remaining on the side of History and the Proletariat—all these characteristic elements are already present in the earlier experience.

[2] *Ksiega Wspomnien, 1919–1939* (Warsaw, 1960), p. 240.

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It is not enough, however, to indicate the genesis of Deutscher's views to invalidate them. Such a method is a favoured trick of those Marxists who assert that truth is socially determined, and of those psychologists who think it sufficient to locate the motives behind the beliefs to dismiss them. For others it is still necessary to examine their relation to facts and to professed values.

With this proviso it is legitimate to try to discover the social and psychological sources of his bias, which despite his ' Olympian ' affidavits is more marked in his writings than in the work of many other students of Soviet affairs who do not attribute to themselves such lofty intellectual parentage. And, if one wants to find out where Deutscher's pattern of thinking originates, there is no more indicative essay than ' The Ex-Communist Conscience ' which appeared in the *Reporter* in April 1950 (and which was then reproduced in 1955 as the opening chapter in *Heretics and Renegades*).

In this essay Deutscher formulated his ideological *credo*. In it he opposes Communist Heretics to Communist Renegades. He implies that he himself belongs to the former category, but does not define it directly and leaves the reader to infer what it is and what it is not from his criticisms of the renegades:

> Nearly every ex-communist broke with his party in the name of communism. Nearly everyone set out to defend the ideal of socialism from the abuses of a bureaucracy subservient to Moscow. Nearly everyone began by throwing out the dirty water of the Russian revolution to protect the baby bathing in it. Sooner or later these intentions are forgotten or abandoned. Having broken with a party bureaucracy in the name of communism, the heretic goes on to break with communism itself. He no longer defends socialism from unscrupulous abuse; he now defends mankind from the fallacy of socialism. He no longer throws out the dirty water of the Russian revolution to protect the baby; he discovers that the baby is a monster which must be strangled. The heretic becomes a renegade.

Not so the ' Heretic '. He will remain true to his ideals, even though this may involve some semantic confusion (such as indiscriminate mixing of the terms socialism and communism), and the straining of metaphors and historical parallels. He will refrain from breaking with communism, notwithstanding the Leningrad affair, the hanging of Kostov and Rajk, the Crimean case, the Slansky trial, and the doctors' plot.

For the ' Heretic ', ' the world is split between Stalinism and an anti-Stalinist alliance in much the same way as it was split between Napoleonic France and the Holy Alliance '. He considers therefore that ' the only dignified attitude the intellectual ex-communist can take is to rise *au-dessus de la mêlée*. He cannot join the Stalinist camp or the anti-Stalinist Holy Alliance without doing violence to his better self.' But he does not renounce the cause of the prevention of cruelty to bathing children and continues to defend it in the most influential press organs of the wicked Holy Alliance. Somewhat inconsistently, he justifies this

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attitude by recalling 'some great "intellectuals" who, in a similar situation in the past, refused to identify themselves with any established Cause'. He, the 'Heretic', unlike the communist 'Renegade', follows in the footsteps of Jefferson, Goethe, and Shelley: like these three 'outsiders to the great conflict of their time', he prefers not to commit himself. Unfortunately, 'most ex-communist intellectuals are inclined to follow the tradition of Wordsworth and Coleridge rather than that of Goethe and Shelley', and that implies that they are ready for anything: 'our ex-communist, for the best of reasons, does the most vicious things. He advances bravely in the front rank of every witch hunt. His blind hatred of his former ideal is leaven to contemporary conservatism. Not infrequently he denounces even the mildest brand of the "welfare state" as "legislative Bolshevism".'

This description of the ex-communist conservative diehard hardly applies to the six writers—Koestler, Silone, André Gide, Louis Fischer, Richard Wright, and Stephen Spender—whose book, *The God that Failed*, Deutscher was ostensibly reviewing in his essay. None of them became a reactionary socially and all of them remained liberal politically. But it is true that some ex-communists have a tendency to reaction-formation or to manic denial. Georg Simmel in his classical analysis of the phenomenon of apostasy described it with far greater perception than Deutscher; according to surveys on the subject, the majority of ex-communists tend to settle on the social-democratic and not on the conservative positions.[3] There is of course a variety of psychological reactions among former communists. To the present writer, who belongs to a later generation, and was not, like Mr Deutscher, involved in the political struggles of the thirties, it seems that Deutscher's ambivalence derives from what may be called an inverted 'apostasy-complex'. For this reason he remains fixated in his adolescent stage in the twenties and tends to romanticise his early beliefs, the 'heroic period of the revolution'. Nor is the 'Heretic' free from failings with which he charges others, such as, for instance, 'the ex-communist's characteristic incapacity for detachment'. It would not be easy to disentangle what is projection and what displacement in Deutscher's description of a 'Renegade':

> He is haunted by a vague sense that he has betrayed either his former ideals or the ideals of bourgeois society; like Koestler, he may even have an ambivalent notion that he has betrayed both. He then tries to suppress his sense of guilt and uncertainty, or to camouflage it by a show of extraordinary certitude and frantic aggressiveness. He insists that the world should recognise his uneasy conscience as the clearest conscience of all.

This can hardly be excelled as a description of Deutscher himself.

[3] Cf. G. A. Almond, *The Appeals of Communism* (Princeton University Press, 1954). The same applies to the young Polish revisionists whom Deutscher scolded in 1957 and implored not to become 'renegades'.

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1942–1947: Predictions and Comments

DEUTSCHER began to display 'historical impartiality' in his writings even before Stalin began to lay, at Teheran, Yalta, and Potsdam, the foundations of his post-war empire. In an article which appeared seven months after Hitler's attack on Russia in the Polish weekly, *Wiadomosci Polskie,* published in London,[4] Deutscher, writing under the pen-name Ignacy Niemczycki (a Polish rendering of his name), was already putting forward the main ideas and prognostications which he was to repeat during the next twenty years, whatever the current historical evidence at his disposal. For him subsequent events are not relevant evidence to confirm or modify his opinions. These are an expression of faith of the 'true believer' and therefore not to be measured by the normal yardstick by which political expectations can be accepted or rejected as realistic or not, that is, by testing the predictions against what has actually happened, not at some time in the future, but at the time when the predictions are politically relevant, when they affect political attitudes and behaviour. Deutscher goes on repeating his optimistic prognostications and claims credit for them whenever things are improving in the Soviet Union, but conveniently forgets all the *specific* predictions he made which were disproved by events. Whenever possible, he follows in the footsteps of the Delphic oracle and makes his predictions vague, conditional, and qualified enough to leave himself a way out whatever happens. But this type of insurance is not always available, nor is his other favourite line of retreat, the claim that he forecasts long-term developments only. The blurb for *Heretics and Renegades* states that the 'author's forecasts have a way of coming true with astonishing accuracy, as even the sceptics have found'; in his foreword to *Russia after Stalin,* Deutscher wrote: 'I willingly admit that I had not expected that my prognostications would begin to come true so soon' (p. 5). Here is what he wrote in his 1942 article mentioned above:

> Since the 22nd of June 1941 the Russian revolution is sealing with the blood of the Russian workers and peasants its indissoluble link with the European workers' movement . . . Underlying Soviet expansion there were none of the typical factors which determine the behaviour of any genuine imperialism. There was no search for markets, for sources of raw materials, or for profitable investment opportunities. Soviet annexations were not necessitated by the socio-economic structure of the country, but were only moves in the defensive politico-strategic game . . . Before the eyes of the Soviet people the war is dispelling the myth of totalitarian infallibility, and it must push the Soviet regime towards deep internal transformations, towards the freedom of the working masses. The democratisation of the Soviet regime will not only be a powerful stimulus for the development of socialism in the whole world; it will

[4] 22 February 1942. Ironically enough, the weekly was closed two years later by the British Government for its anti-Soviet attitude.

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> ultimately establish the indissoluble link between the workers' movement in all countries and the fighting peoples of the USSR.

Well, this particular prediction did not come true; the sceptics were justified. The Soviet 'working masses'—and many of them shared some of Deutscher's illusions during the war—were disappointed; they were not pushed 'towards freedom'. The non-imperialist Stalin, lacking any Marxist motives for expansion, established his control over a hundred million East Europeans, and these changes were promptly accepted by Deutscher as 'the irreversible post-war revolutions in Eastern Europe'. This might have been expected; in the same article he had stated that 'revolution brought on the point of bayonets, and realised by barbaric means, is *still* a revolution', and is that not enough to justify it in the 'progressive' mind? In his articles in the *Economist* and the *Observer*, published between 1942 and 1947, Deutscher repeated his thesis of 1942, predicting Soviet democratisation. It was of course quite wrong, but was well received at the time, for the public in the West was war-weary and looked forward to a post-war world of stability and peace.

After the war, as 'Peregrine' in the *Observer*, Deutscher continued to enlighten the British public about developments in the Soviet bloc. Thus Stalin's switch from the 'patriotic' line during the war to the more 'leftist' line consonant with the post-war expansion was presented as a revival of internationalism:

> The most striking feature in Russian life during the first months of peace has been the ebb of the nationalist mood (11 November 1945).

This on the very eve of the 'Russia First' discoveries campaign. At that time, too, the Spectre of the Soviet Marshal appeared, which later on regularly made its entrance to frighten the Western public and to show that an accommodating attitude of non-resistance was really best, as the alternative was too frightful to contemplate. The reshuffle of the Soviet government, which included Voroshilov and Budenny, but not Zhukov, Rokossovsky, Konev, or Tolbukhin, brought the following comment:

> The formation of the new government looks like a victory of the peace party over the group that might be regarded as a potential war party (31 March 1946).

This not so long before the Berlin blockade and the Korean war. Nor did the satellites under the progressive bayonets fare too badly. In his despatches from Germany, Deutscher discovered much to praise in Ulbricht's future Reich:

> Here in the Russian zone, German culture has unexpected life and liberty . . . One could not help reflecting that the much overworked phrase 'Soviet cultural revolution' had not been an empty sound after all . . . The Russian Military Government, whatever its failings and faults, does give a sense of purpose and direction to many Germans. This is perhaps the most important fact which impresses

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> itself upon the mind of the visitor to the Russian zone (3 March 1946).

In Poland Deutscher did not notice the accumulating grievances which ten years later were to bring about the October revolt. But he resented the remark of the American Ambassador in Warsaw, who was alleged to have warned the Poles that American credits would not be forthcoming if nationalisation of industries continued:

> This is an act of intervention as unceremonious as any to which the Russians have yet committed themselves (13 January 1946).

This was when the Russians were establishing full political control of the country and continuing its economic exploitation. Deutscher was pooh-poohing the steps then being taken by the communists towards a more thorough Stalinist *Gleichschaltung* of Eastern Europe. He did not like the expression 'iron curtain', but in his correspondence of 2 June 1946, found that it 'has been lifted over most of Europe'. On the other hand the policy of the 'national front', with the drive by the Communist parties to swallow the Socialist parties as a preliminary to their own total domination, was warmly recommended:

> The objective which Communists professed to pursue—the creation of a united Socialist Party—is a legitimate and sound objective (7 April 1946).

His other dispatches during this period were in the same strain.

1948–1953: Conscience and Perception

When the curtain finally fell over Eastern Europe and Stalinism entered its terroristic heyday between 1948 and 1953, Mr Deutscher found it difficult to detect signs of the predicted democratisation. He withdrew to a defensive position, disapproving of the persecutions but also of those who voiced their outrage without realising the dialectic of terror and progress; he deprecated Stalinist malevolence, but even more the aggrieved outcries on behalf of its victims by the 'cold warriors' and the 'anti-communist crusaders'. His was 'the clearest conscience of all'; in contrast to others he possessed a historical perspective on the crimes at the time when they were being committed. This gave him the proper sense of proportion to assess their significance with equanimity until the time when 'history will cleanse and reshape Stalin's work'.

It is interesting to compare the tenor of Deutscher's writings on Stalin's misdeeds at different periods. Before the war he denounced them, using the word 'crimes' (as Trotsky did then and Thorez is doing now). After the war he still condemned them, of course, but avoided using the word itself. After Stalin's death his references to the previous period are still muffled in circumlocutions, in which the moral condemnation is indirect, such as the repeated description of the last of the Stalin crimes as 'the scandal with the Kremlin doctors'. 'Through this incident', said Deutscher in *Russia after Stalin*, 'Stalinism reduced itself

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to ghastly absurdity. It committed moral suicide even before the physical death of its author' (p. 112).

It is difficult to see why it is this 'incident' which is such a scandal that it amounts to the 'moral suicide' of Stalinism, and not a myriad other crimes committed earlier. But the choice of words becomes clear in the light of his earlier writings on the end of the Stalin era. For instance, at the time now referred to by Soviet Jews as the Black Years, when all Jewish cultural activities were completely liquidated, many Jewish writers annihilated, and the persecution of 'rootless cosmopolitans' was preparing the ground for a more radical solution for which the 'doctors' plot' was to be the prelude, Deutscher denied the existence of governmental action specifically directed against Soviet Jews (hence his subsequent alarm about 'the scandal'). On 7 December 1951 the London *Jewish Chronicle* reported a symposium on 'Can Jewish community life continue under communism?', held under the auspices of the World Jewish Congress, in which Deutscher took part:

> Mr Deutscher said he did not believe that one could accuse the Soviet Government of any special anti-Jewish attitude. It seemed to him that the Jew remained in Russia equal to every other citizen in regard to the law. He added that he dissociated himself from the assumption which seemed to be implied in the question.

In general, Deutscher leaned over backwards to give the mildest picture of the last years of Stalin and the most charitable interpretation to his post-war actions. The heresy hunts 'amounted to little more than shadow-boxing',[5] and anyway at the 19th CPSU congress 'the young Stalinist guard witnessed a partial self-repudiation of Stalinism'.[6] Who would recognise this era, when the country was blanketed by terror, and fear seeped into every nook and cranny of Soviet life, when the Byzantine adulation of the tyrant reached its zenith as he was preparing another blood-bath, from Deutscher's description?

> As a rule the 'deviationists' were not imprisoned or deported. They were required to confess the error of their ways and were punished by some mild form of demotion. Sometimes the government honoured them with the highest awards only a short time after they had been singled out for attack. Even the confessions of error were different in kind from those to which Russia had become accustomed earlier on. Having uttered the conventional words of recantation, the 'deviationists' often defended themselves and their views in a veiled yet transparent manner.[7]

Mein Liebchen was willst du noch mehr?—as Heine would have said. But there is more of the same in Deutscher's perception of the period in which, according to him, 'the terror seemed to have spent much of its impetus' (this at the time of the Leningrad and Crimean cases, etc.). Here is his verdict on it in an essay based on a series of his articles

[5] *Russia after Stalin*, p. 108.
[6] *The Reporter*, 23 December 1952.
[7] *Russia after Stalin*, p. 107.

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which appeared in *The Reporter* (New York) in the summer and autumn of 1951 (subsequently updated in his book) [8]:

> Up to the time of the scandal with the Kremlin doctors, that is up to 1953, there was no unearthing of sinister conspiracies in Moscow, no hectic search for traitors and enemies of the people, no witches' Sabbath comparable to that of 1936–8. During the whole closing phase of the Stalin era only one member of the Politbureau, N. Voznesensky, the head of the State Planning Commission, was purged. He disappeared suddenly and noiselessly, without being called upon to prostrate himself and confess his crimes in public. Other party members charged with heresy or deviation suffered mild demotion but escaped the extreme form of punishment.[9]

Deutscher, who at the time and later indignantly rejected accusations of writing apologies for Stalin,[10] has been overtaken by events, not least by official Soviet statements on the Stalin era. But he never admitted having been wrong. His own summary was that 'far from refuting my prognostications, events have confirmed them' (*Esprit*, March 1954).

1953–1962: Expectations and Realities

After March 1953, Deutscher's forecasts suddenly acquired a new look. The disappearance of the Deity obviously presaged changes. The question was what forms the changes would take, how they would affect the Soviet political system, what the outcome of the struggle for the succession would be. Here Deutscher's optimism was bound to be less misplaced than in the previous periods, for some improvement for the population as a result of the conjunction of the political crisis, economic growth, and social changes was certain. About many of the changes he was quite correct, but his political prognostications were again off the mark, because of his simplified notions about the relationship between economic and political change.

Deutscher began to commit his expectations to print one day after Stalin's death when, in an article in *The Manchester Guardian*, he asserted that the post-Stalin crisis could 'be solved only in one of two ways: through a democratic regeneration of the Revolution or through counter-revolution'. This restricted view of the alternatives was soon replaced by another dichotomy, development towards democracy or military dictatorship, which he expounded in detail in his *Russia after Stalin*. He explained that 'a military dictatorship would signify neither a counter-revolution, in the Marxist sense, nor the restoration of Stalinism'; but he thought that 'the prospect of a military dictatorship, while not altogether unreal, is improbable', therefore he envisaged 'a

[8] *Heretics and Renegades*, p. 128.

[9] At the time Bulganin told Khrushchev: 'I'm just on my way to see Comrade Stalin. We shall talk like friends. But where I shall be going when I leave him—home or gaol—I don't know.' The Soviet student quoting this remark added 'That was how everybody felt at that time.' (*Survey*, No. 26, p. 56).

[10] Cf. *Partisan Review*, Fall 1956, p. 515, and Preface to the Vintage Edition of *Stalin*, N.Y., 1960, p. VIII.

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gradual democratic evolution'. He repeated the assertion that 'the alternative is still between a democratic evolution of communism and some sort of military dictatorship' more than once,[11] and while prudently stressing the long-term character of this alternative, he tended to stretch the facts of the post-Stalin struggle for power to fit the Procrustean bed of his dichotomy.

Thus, although he had already been obsessively overplaying the analogy with the French revolution and had declared that 'the Russian counterparts to the Jacobin, Thermidorian, and Bonapartist phases of the revolution had in a curious way overlapped and merged in Stalinism',[12] he now discovered that 'between January and March 1953 a Russian Bonaparte cast his shadow ahead'.[13] The shadow has been reappearing ever since, without becoming long enough to bridge the gap between prediction and fulfilment. After the elimination of Beria in July 1953, Deutscher discovered a gap 'between the galvanised Stalinist method of government and the un-Stalinist mechanics of power. Across this gap a potential Bonaparte once again cast his shadow'.[14] Malenkov resigned on 8 February 1955 because 'the marshals joined hands with the leaders of the Gosplan in an otherwise somewhat unnatural alliance against the Prime Minister and his supporters'.[15] The Soviet marshals had been on the upgrade in the West and Zhukov was already being cast for Bonaparte by the press fed on Deutscher-type commentaries. On the June 1957 showdown he wrote in *The Times* (10 July 1957) that 'for some time past Marshal Zhukov had already acted as virtual umpire vis-à-vis the opposed factions; and he now threw his decisive weight behind Khrushchev'. Therefore Zhukov's inclusion in the Presidium meant that 'from the moment of his appearance there he seems as if cast for the arbiter's role'.

It must have been a great disappointment when shortly afterwards Zhukov was expelled from the Presidium without so much as causing a ripple on the surface; the Army did not raise a finger to defend its best candidate for the role of Bonaparte. Evidently, the relation between the Party and the Army was not what the prophet believed it to be.

11 *Heretics and Renegades*, p. 188 & p. 209.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 54. This was written in 1950 in the introduction to the French edition of *Stalin*.

13 *Russia after Stalin*, p. 167.

14 *Heretics and Renegades*, p. 189. Characterising Bulganin, Deutscher wrote in the *Manchester Guardian* (9 February, 1955): 'The new Premier is in the Army but not of it. But behind his back stand the real leaders of the officer corps, Marshals Vassilevsky, Govorov, Zhukov and others, the real candidates for the still vacant post of a Soviet Bonaparte'.

15 *The Manchester Guardian*, 12 February 1955. Deutscher immediately detected the personal and social divisions behind the fall of Malenkov: 'From the beginning Bulganin and Kaganovich were apparently the chief opponents of this powerful pro-consumer programme . . . Bulganin and Kaganovich found powerful allies in the Army and in the Gosplan. The Malenkov-Mikoyan view, on the other hand, found widespread but less influential support in academic and journalistic circles, among the intelligentsia, among the heads of the light industries, and in party cadres concerned closely with the nation's morale'

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But there were some saving graces: Deutscher was after all more committed in his predictions to the 'democratic' part of his alternative. As always, he underlined any element in the situation which could be interpreted as a stepping-stone towards democracy.

From the beginning he derided those who stressed the inevitable rivalries among the post-Stalin Soviet leaders. In *Russia after Stalin* he did not even mention the struggle for power among Stalin's heirs as a likely development. But after Beria's fall he immediately wrote a *Postscript* to the American edition (reproduced in *Heretics and Renegades*) in which he tried to cover his traces by an attack on Mr George Kennan for his alleged belief that there were no 'genuine divisions within the Soviet ruling group'.

Mr Deutscher could not have been more mistaken. First of all he said that Malenkov 'merged the Ministry of State Security with that of Internal Affairs and placed Beria at the head of the united department'. Beria gained the reputation of being 'one of the more moderate and educated men in Stalin's entourage' (*Russia after Stalin*, pp. 129–130). 'In the last period of his activity Beria represented the curious paradox of a semi-liberal police chief in a totalitarian state' (*Heretics and Renegades*, p. 177). It was therefore a great shock when the 'liberal' Malenkov proclaimed that the 'liberal' Beria was an enemy of the people and an imperialist agent. Both of them, Deutscher had suggested (*Russia after Stalin*, p. 120 and *Heretics and Renegades*, p. 184) had been *dvurushniki* (double-faced) under Stalin, concealing their liberal leanings. The fall of Beria represented 'half a victory' for 'the die-hards of Stalinism' (ibid. p. 187). 'The same old hands of the political police, resentfully straining to recover their sacred right to extort "confessions" from their victims, and the Great Russian chauvinists, joined hands to wreak vengeance on him' (ibid. p. 177).[16]

But *nil desperandum*. This setback to the 'liberal Malenkov' did not mean the end of 'collective leadership'. Deutscher explained that the Russian Communist Party favours 'the substitution of collective leadership for the party regime controlled by a single leader. Collective leadership or government by committee implies free debate at first within that committee and later also in the lower grades of the Party'.[17] It is only natural that in view of this Deutscher tended at the time to diminish Khrushchev's role. At the time of the 20th Congress, he referred again to 'the change from autocracy to collective leadership' and declared that Khrushchev (previously depicted as the leader of the Stalinist wing) clashed at the Congress with Mikoyan. They 'represented two different

[16] A simpler version, based on Khrushchev's indiscretions, indicates that Beria was shot or strangled by his Presidium colleagues, who, fearing his power, with the help of some military commanders sprang a trap on him.

[17] *Manchester Guardian*, 4 November 1954. In *Russia after Stalin* Deutscher declared: 'Historically, the Communist party has lost its own freedom because it denied it to others. When at last it regains freedom it cannot but return it to others' (p. 147). But he mentioned only social organisations, not other parties.

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and in part conflicting attitudes. Mr Khrushchev appears to take a middle line between the die-hards of Stalinism and the anti-Stalinists '.[18]

After the fall of Malenkov, Deutscher suggested that it was Bulganin who was the chief opponent of his consumptionist policy.[19] Shortly before Khrushchev's June 1957 victory, he still stressed the existence of the institution of ' collective leadership ' and pointed out that ' the essence of collective leadership is dispersal, diffusion, and therefore limitation of power '.[20] After the June 1957 *coup* he wrote that ' Khrushchev's ascendency may well be short-lived ',[21] but reluctantly admitted in *The Great Contest* (London, 1960, p. 12) that although Khrushchev had not become the autocrat that Stalin was, ' he appears to have done away with collective leadership as Stalin did '. Since then Deutscher has refrained from talking about ' collective leadership '.

Libertarian Hopes and Anti-Libertarian Commitment

All this time struggles for greater freedom were indeed taking place in the communist countries, and it was not difficult to recognise the protagonists and to identify those who were for freedom and those who were against it. Many such issues and events could be used to test the libertarian spirit of the observer. What was Deutscher's attitude towards them? Was he on the side of the oppressed or the oppressors? His pronouncements provide a guide to his commitment to what he designates as ' a fully fledged Soviet democracy ' of the future. To take a few instances:

Shortly after the Polish ' Spring in October ', the Warsaw weekly, *Swiat*, reproduced Deutscher's essay, ' The Ex-Communist's Conscience '. A few months later a young communist writer, A. Braun, expressed some misgivings:

> Deutscher recommends abstention from activity as the only attitude worthy of an intellectual. Unfortunately this is an impossible attitude for an intellectual living . . . in such a society as ours. One has to remember that in our country people were destroyed and liquidated not for any activity but for that very attitude (*Nowa Kultura*, 3 March 1957).

Deutscher sent a letter to the editor of *Nowa Kultura* (7 April 1957) in which he warned the young communist ' revisionists ' that they might be wrong in their attitude ' to the Russian revolution because they are too near to it '. That was precisely their chief complaint, but Deutscher, who was farther away and more alert to ' historical perspectives ' reminded them that ' the distinction between a " heretic " and a " renegade " is relevant not only in the West, but also in the East—in Poland '.

18 *The Times*, 28 February 1956. He reverts to this assertion again: ' Khrushchev's prestige and influence are on the decline. His conciliatory attitude certainly did not stand up to the test of events ' (*France-Observateur*, 8 November 1956).

19 *Manchester Guardian*, 10 February 1955.

20 *Universities and Left Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 4.

21 *The Times*, 11 July 1957

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He was applauded by the official *Polityka,* but the 'revisionists' were unimpressed. One of them, K. T. Toeplitz, gave a pointed summary of the issue.

> Measuring our problems by the abstract norms of the traditional 'socialist struggle', Deutscher (at present living in England) has entirely misplaced his support and his sympathies. This misunderstanding reminds me of a well-known anecdote about a young Jew who was studying Marxism. Troubled with doubts about the doctrine, he went to a Rabbi and asked: 'Tell me, Rabbi, is it possible to build socialism in just one country?' 'Certainly', said the Rabbi, after pondering a while. 'You can build socialism in one country, but you have to live in another' (*Nowa Kultura,* 21 April 1957).

Deutscher was undeterred. At the time of the Party counter-offensive against the press in Poland, when the 'springboard of October', the celebrated magazine *Po Prostu,* and other periodicals were being suppressed, he gave an interview to the weekly *Swiat* in which he approved of 'limitations on democratic freedoms at certain periods' provided that such practices were not presented 'as a virtue, still less an eternal virtue'. Thus when it came to a concrete political issue, he found himself as usual on the side of the censors, a singularly uncomfortable position for one who dreams that the goddess of freedom may yet be tempted into the communist camp.

The same attitude was consistently displayed on other issues when freedom was at stake. He would always adorn it, of course, by a 'realistic' argument, but so did all the acolytes of all the autocrats in history. In this matter what is important is not a rationalisation but a political attitude. And in the case of Deutscher the political attitude is unmistakable. The Hungarian revolution provided another test.

Deutscher rationalised the renewed restrictions imposed by the Party in Poland by discovering the 'proletarian movement from below which kept the Polish Thermidorian forces at bay in October'.[22] But in Hungary the issues were clear-cut and it was difficult to embrace the goddess of freedom while condoning her rape. That is, however, precisely what he managed to do.

In the first place he proclaimed that here was 'a Thermidor which in appearance is also, or even primarily, a war of national liberation', that 'Hungary in effect rejected Russian bayonets together with the revolution which was originally brought to that country on those bayonets'. Although it was 'the ardent work of the whole insurgent people' it was a counter-revolution nonetheless, a counter-revolution in which 'Nagy and his faction played the role which Trotsky at one time assumed Bukharin and Rykov would play in Russia'. Therefore his plain verdict was that 'in October-November [1956] the people of Hungary in a heroic frenzy tried unwittingly to put the clock back'.

[22] *Universities and Left Review,* Vol. I, No. 1, p. 10. In fact it was the proletariat which had to be restrained from above from fear of Soviet intervention in October 1956.

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It was not, however, his last word on the subject. In a lecture before a Canadian audience in 1959, the unwitting counter-revolution of the whole people—crushed by Soviet intervention—became simply and euphemistically 'a civil war' *tout court*.[23] Thus ended Deutscher's romance with the goddess of freedom in Hungary. There are other instances indicating his libertarian spirit.

He was indignant with Orwell for his untimely literary exposure of Stalinism, when the crimes were being committed, and later with Pasternak for his post-Stalin testimony to the epoch in *Doctor Zhivago*. Even the letter of rejection by the editors of *Novy Mir* was not so disparaging as Deutscher's review of *Doctor Zhivago*. Obviously, these two authors touched Deutscher on the raw and it is not difficult to see why.

Orwell's complete intellectual integrity and the metapolitical serenity of Pasternak were in striking contrast to his own equivocations. Orwell, he said, 'lacks the richness and subtlety of thought and the philosophical detachment of the great satirists', and his political reasoning struck Deutscher as 'a Freudian sublimation of persecution mania'.[24] Pasternak 'speaks the language of the dead and not of the living'; his was 'the voice from the grave', even though he was still living at the time. In Deutscher's interpretation, *Doctor Zhivago* is a 'political novel', or even just a 'political history', and Zhivago only 'a sterile egotist, a humanitarian moralist'. Not so the prophet himself, who in his philosophical detachment roundly asserted in December 1958 (i.e. when Pasternak compared himself in a poem to 'a hunted beast') that 'the individual freedom and welfare of Pasternak have never been interfered with until now' and reproached him for putting up only 'passive resistance' in Stalin's time: 'In his poems he escapes from the tyranny, he does not defy it'. And that is why he survived when the majority of poets and writers of his generation either committed suicide, were deported or arrested and annihilated. Stalin himself 'watched over his security and welfare' because he knew 'that he had little to fear from his poetry'.[25]

Here then was a man who took a solitary stand against a totalitarian state impugned by an author who more than once had served as apologist for Stalin's tyranny. There is not much evidence here of the Goethean *Höflichkeit des Herzens*.

Mr Deutscher's Facts and Figures

In all his pronouncements, Deutscher emphasises the scientific character of his Marxism. 'Stalinism', according to him, was 'the Marxism of the

[23] *The Great Contest*, pp. 12, 16, & 48.

[24] *Heretics and Renegades*, pp. 36, 48. This remark shows: 1. A singular insensitiveness to the subject of persecution in the biographer of the hunted and murdered Trotsky; 2. An ignorance of Freud for whom sublimation applied only to primary instincts and was in any case positive. In Freud's scheme, persecution mania (which is an obsolete concept anyway), cannot be sublimated.

[25] 'Boris Pasternak et le calendrier de la Revolution,' *Les Temps Modernes*, January 1959, pp. 1061, 1064, 1070, 1081.

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illiterate'; his own is the genuine product. How rigorously does he apply it to the analysis of Soviet developments?

Not only is his handling of facts and figures often less than precise; sometimes he is amazingly ignorant of the matters he writes about with such expert self-assurance. Here, for instance, is Deutscher's verdict on the development of Soviet planning theory under Stalin:[26]

> The theory of planning was one of those very few fields in which the general intellectual depression of the Stalin era did not prevent the achievement of definite progress. The planners had at their disposal an amazingly effective 'secret weapon': the famous theorems of 'simple and expanding reproduction' which Karl Marx had developed in the second volume of *Das Kapital*. Those theorems, modelled on Quesnay's *Tableaux Economiques*, describe the composition and circulation of a nation's productive resources under capitalism. Adapted by Soviet planners to a publicly owned economy and further developed, they helped to produce results which future historians may well describe as the most momentous feat in social technology achieved in this generation.

It is difficult to decide what to admire most in this passage: the audacity of its author or his ignorance. Everything here is wrong: the theory of economic planning under Stalin shared the fate of other social sciences, the 'thaw' in economics began only after Stalin's death; the 'secret weapon' has very little to do with actual Soviet planning, and in particular Quesnay's *Tableaux Economiques* have no practical application in the activities of Gosplan. Deutscher was evidently led astray by the ideological embellishments of Soviet economic writings because, if anything, *Das Kapital* prevented a further development of Soviet planning theory. In point of fact, the whole post-Stalin discussion on planning centred on this obstacle and its further development depends very much on the acceptance of un-Marxist importations from Western economic theory and on mathematical economics, as well as of the native revisionist theories of Novozhilov and Kantorovich. The Marxist theory of value was, and still is, a stumbling block to progress, and if the techniques of input-output analysis and of linear programming are being adapted to Soviet planning it is in spite and not because of *Das Kapital*.[27]

Notwithstanding the fact that 'the most momentous feat in social technology' had already been developed under Stalin, Deutscher later discovered 'some revival of theoretical discussion' in Soviet economics. He went on to give his Canadian academic audience some gratuitous advice (*The Great Contest*, p. 32).

> A great deal of this discussion must, I am afraid, remain unintelligible to Western students trained in the economics of Marshall or even [*sic*] Keynes, because it is conducted in terms of Marxist theory. Here is one more reason, a severely practical one, why

[26] *Heretics and Renegades*, p. 117.

[27] On this see A. Zauberman, 'Revisionism in Soviet Economics,' in *Revisionism*, edited by L. Labedz (London, 1962); and R. W. Campbell, 'Marx, Kantorovich, and Novozhilov,' in *Slavic Review*, October 1961.

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> Western universities should at last begin to encourage serious and first-hand study of Marx's work. You cannot understand the present Russian economic debates and planning practices without knowing *Das Kapital*.

Mr Deutscher seems quite unaware of the vast amount of research being done in Western universities on Soviet economics, and of the fact that the Association of Economists studying this subject in America alone numbers hundreds of scholars.

The same type of ideological prejudice vitiates his appreciation of Soviet agricultural realities. His references to the subject are consistently misleading because of his ideological commitment to the collective farm system. In his first dispatch from Germany to the *Observer* (29 July 1945) Deutscher reported that some of the German soldiers on the Eastern front had been 'very favourably impressed by the collective farms in which, they said, they saw efficiency as well as social justice'. In 1953 he endorsed Stalin's rejection of the proposed transfer of the Machine Tractor Stations to the *kolkhozes* by saying that this 'might indeed mark the beginning of a powerful development of modern capitalism in Russian farming', and that 'Stalin is undoubtedly right' in believing that 'the result would be an enormous strengthening of the anti-socialist elements in the Soviet economy'.[28]

But a few years later, when the MTS were transferred, he endorsed Khrushchev's 'new deal' for the farmers which, he said, was undertaken 'in the belief that state-owned industry, with its greatly expanded resources and power, has nothing to fear from an increase in the economic strength of farming'.[29] These ideological gyrations, although not always following the current Soviet line, are related to it. His approach is uncritical, not only to Soviet facts, but also to Soviet figures. He quotes unreservedly the official Soviet statistics whenever it suits his argument, although he knows quite well that they have to be approached with caution.

Speaking about the 19th congress (in Stalin's time) in an address to Chatham House, Deutscher referred to the choice between guns and butter in the context of the time: 'I think that in this respect Russia's situation compares favourably with that of Western Europe'.[30] And in his 1959 Canadian lectures, with the same sanguine credulity, he is confident that ten years later Soviet standards of living 'are certain to have risen above Western European standards' (*The Great Contest*,

[28] *Soviet Studies*, April 1953.

[29] *The Great Contest*, pp. 15 and 16. In *Russia after Stalin* Deutscher gave a mildly critical, but relatively favourable picture of Stalin's agricultural legacy (pp. 65–66). Nowadays, even the communist *l'Unita* (31 January 1962) declares that Stalin left 'a grave stagnation in agriculture, which in many sectors could not progress beyond the pre-war levels.' And 'Mr. Khrushchev himself has told *The Times* that when Stalin died agriculture was in a state of stagnation' (*The Times*, 2 March 1962).

[30] *International Affairs* (London), April 1953, p. 153.

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p. 65). Is it surprising that a Soviet writer, referring to this prediction, quotes with approval 'the English economist, Deutscher'? [31]

As a legal expert, Mr Deutscher reported the Soviet debate before the adoption of the new legal code, stating that 'under the old code, of Vyshinsky's ill-famed inspiration, the legal trial, especially in political cases, was based on the presumption of the defendant's guilt'. The new code, on the contrary contains 'neither the presumption of guilt nor the presumption of innocence'.[32]

This is casuistic nonsense. The 1958 Soviet debate did indeed centre on the issue of the 'presumption of innocence' which the more liberal Soviet lawyers wanted to embody in the new code, but the old code did not actually contain 'the presumption of guilt'. It rejected the 'presumption of innocence', but that is not the same. In his book, *Teoria sudebnykh dokazatelstv v sovetskom prave* (Moscow, 1946), Vyshinsky even argued the superiority of Soviet law because, he said, it embodied the principle of the presumption of innocence, and put the burden of proof on the prosecution (pp. 190–198).

On other matters of some historical interest, and not without a certain sociological and doctrinal significance, Deutscher again gets his facts mixed up. Reviewing Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed* (in the *New Statesman*, 24 August 1957), he informs his readers that James Burnham 'based his *Managerial Revolution* on a few fragments of Trotsky's theory'. In fact, Burnham did precisely the reverse: after a long dispute in which Trotsky rejected the ideas first expounded by Bruno Rizzi in *La bureaucratisation du monde*, Burnham left the Trotskyist movement and elaborated these ideas in *The Managerial Revolution*. It was precisely on this question that Trotsky conducted his last political struggle, as his last writings (in the collection *In Defence of Marxism*, New York, 1942) show; Burnham's position, as can be seen from this volume, was diametrically opposite to Trotsky's.

It would be too tedious to enumerate more of Deutscher's errors; they are not conscious mis-statements, but rather subconscious misrepresentations. They have a definite pattern, reflecting a bias so strong that, evidently without realising he is doing so, he often manipulates reality to suit his argument. When it comes to damning Orwell, he notes 'some points of resemblance in the life stories' of him and Zamyatin, and the biography of the Russian gets distorted [33]:

> In 1917 Zamyatin viewed the new revolution with cold and disillusioned eyes, convinced that nothing good would come out of it. After a brief imprisonment he was allowed by the Bolshevik Government to go abroad; and it was as an émigré in Paris that he wrote *We* in the early 1920's.

[31] A. Startsev, in *Mirovaya Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya*, No. 2, 1961, p. 31.
[32] *The Great Contest*, p. 37.
[33] *Heretics and Renegades*, p. 37.

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Everything here is wrong. Zamyatin was not only not against the revolution, but 'greeted it with enthusiasm and spent endless hours in lecture halls and conference rooms on its behalf'.[34] He became disillusioned only later. He wrote *We* in Russia and not in Paris; it was only published abroad. He was not in Paris in the early 1920s. He went there in 1931 after a campaign of vituperation against him in the Soviet press. He wrote a dignified and ironical letter to Stalin, asking for permission to leave, which was granted. But he was not imprisoned, nor as an émigré did he seem 'at times half-reconciled with the Soviet regime when it was already producing its Benefactor in the person of Stalin', as Deutscher asserts.[35]

But it is in his commentary on current political developments that Deutscher's approach to facts leaves most to be desired. He does not present his speculations about Soviet political developments as hypotheses but as established historical facts. His stylistic devices include such practices as reporting conversations between Soviet leaders in inverted commas, as if Deutscher himself had heard them, and describing their attitudes and actions in a way which suggests that, if he was not present, he was at least eavesdropping. So for instance his description of the angry exchanges between Malenkov and Khrushchev in the *New Statesman*, and of the conversation between Mao Tse-tung and Ferhat Abbas (whose own version of it in *Afrique Action* was very dissimilar from the one given by Deutscher in *The Reporter*, 10 November 1960). One of the descriptions reads as follows: Khrushchev, pointing to Molotov and Kaganovich exclaimed: 'Your hands are stained with the blood of our party leaders and of innumerable innocent Bolsheviks!' 'So are yours!' Molotov and Kaganovich shouted back at him. 'Yes, so are mine', Khrushchev replied, 'I admit this. But during the purges I was merely carrying out your orders. I was not then a member of the Politbureau and bear no responsibility for its decisions. You were. (*The New Statesman*, 24 January 1959), and there are many other instances of such inside knowledge.

He 'knows' that the future leader of the 'anti-Party group', Molotov, was 'semi-retired' at the time of the 20th congress (*The Times*, 29 February 1956), and is 'still influential' now (the *Observer*, 28 January 1962); he 'knows' in 1953 that Malenkov's 'peace party' began 'to explore the lines of retreat from Germany' (*Russia after Stalin*, p. 153) and that the 'Malenkov-Beria bloc' was 'really prepared to abandon the government of Pieck and Ulbricht' (*Heretics and Renegades*, p. 175),[36] just as he 'knows' now that 'Khrushchev will abandon East Germany', and is already contemplating a withdrawal 'to be carried out, if necessary, unilaterally and regardless of the consequences to East

[34] Eugene Zamiatin, *We* (New York, 1959), p. VI.

[35] *Heretics and Renegades*, p. 42.

[36] He repeated this assurance a year later: 'Moscow was almost openly preparing to abandon the government of Pieck and Ulbricht in the first few months after Stalin's death' (*Manchester Guardian*, 3 August 1954).

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German Communism', because it is 'a millstone round his neck' (the *Observer*, 28 January 1962). The point about all these speculations is not that they are or might be mistaken; Deutscher, like everyone else, can sometimes guess right, but that highly conjectural suppositions are presented as actual events, when in reality they are nothing but his own (usually wrong) inferences, deductions, and constructions. He is, of course, not supposed to apply the same degree of rigour in his political commentaries as in his historical writings, but even so such practices in his essays, often reprinted in book form, fall well below accepted standards. Nor is his reputation for critical acumen enhanced by extensive quotations (in *Russia after Stalin*) from fake memoirs such as *My Uncle Joe* (Joseph Stalin) by Budu Svanidze, a book fabricated by the notorious Paris factory of 'Sovietological' forgeries.

Between Khrushchev and Mao

The state of suspended animation which characterises Deutscher's approach to communist affairs makes him as reliable a commentator on the Chinese as on the Soviet scene. Soviet developments are constantly related to the French revolution and its aftermath, with a limited number of operative bogeys (Thermidor and Bonapartism); the Chinese developments in turn are always being compared to the Soviet ones (NEP and Stalinism). Deutscher once said that 'In drawing any analogy, it is . . . important to know where the analogy ends. I hope that I shall not offend badly against this rule'.[37]

He is, however, a serious offender against his own golden rule. After Mao's 'Contradictions among the People' speech Deutscher rushed into another of his historical metaphors. In the *New Statesman* (29 June 1957) he proclaimed that 'it represents a most radical repudiation of Stalinism', that 'it contributes solidly to the winding up of the Stalinist orthodoxy and method of government', that 'in effect, Mao proclaims China's NEP'.

A striking prediction indeed, but, as so often before, hopelessly wrong. Exactly three weeks earlier, on 8 June 1957, the *People's Daily* had initiated the attack on the 'rightists' and made it clear that the 'liberal' interlude was over.

Another of Deutscher's emphatic hopes was disposed of only *post hoc*. Mao, he wrote, 'leaves us with no doubt that he envisages no such "second revolution" [as Stalin's of 1929–32] for China', and that he now preaches the 'inevitability of gradualness'. The 1958 'great leap forward' and the Commune movement provided their own postscript to these assurances. In his enthusiasm for the progressive Mao, whose 'repudiation of Stalinism' was 'certainly more thoroughgoing than was Khrushchev's "secret speech"', Deutscher asserted that he 'argues exactly as Trotsky did nearly 35 years ago'. But this supreme compliment was to undergo some dialectical twists.

[37] *Heretics and Renegades*, p. 53.

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By 1961 Deutscher came to the conclusion that 'the international communist movement remains divided into three wings: left, right, and centre. These wings [represented by Mao, Khrushchev, and Tito] are in some respects the indirect descendants of the three rival communist schools of thought of the 1920s—Trotskyist, Stalinist, and Bukharinist'. Deutscher never was a follower of Bukharin, and anyway Tito did not provide enough of a wave of the future to attract adherents to his not-so-big battalions. Of the two remaining 'indirect descendants', Mao offered radicalism, fundamentalism, revolutionary drive, in short the 'pristine Marxism' of Deutscher's Trotskyist dreams. Khrushchev was 'anti-dogmatic', 'de-Stalinising' Russia, and for 'peaceful coexistence'. The one was nearer 'the heroic period of the revolution', ready to use 'barbaric means to drive barbarism' out of China, and presumably as much entitled to elevate 'the *sacro egoismo* of his revolution to a supreme principle', as was Stalin. But the other, too, was the chosen instrument of 'historical necessity' which would establish pure 'Leninist democracy' in Russia, ushering in 'a new phase in the development of Marxism as free from dogmatism as the pristine Marxism was—or even freer—but immensely enriched by new experience and able to comprehend and interpret it'.

The revivalist spirit pointed to the 'dogmatist' Mao with his 'proletarian internationalism'; the 'democratic' professions indicated the 'liberal' Khrushchev, even though *embourgeoisement* rather than proletarian revival might be the outcome. A cruel dilemma for the ex-Trotskyite biographer of Stalin. Was he to choose the 'great revolutionary despot', Mao, or 'the last *muzhik* Prime Minister' of Russia?

The manifesto of the 81 Communist parties issued in Moscow in November 1960 still induced a hopeful prediction that Mao and Khrushchev

> and their supporters must go on arguing and patching up their differences as best as they can. They are, so to speak, condemned to do this in mutual tolerance, which does not come easy to either of them. This relative tolerance is quite new to contemporary Communism, which has been formed in the monolithic mould of Stalinism.[88]

But soon Deutscher found it more and more difficult to make a virtue of necessity, as the 'mutual tolerance' between the two instruments of 'historical necessity' was becoming both less mutual and less tolerant.

He did not gloss over the differences, but chose an odd way of dealing with them, presenting in the *Sunday Times* (2 July 1961) as a sensational discovery a 'secret circular' said to have been sent by Khrushchev to several communist parties in which Mao was charged with 'disloyalty' and 'incitement to world war'. In fact the article only reproduced, in slightly altered form, the contents of a statement of uncertain origin which had appeared a month earlier in a dissident French communist

[88] *The Reporter*, 5 January 1961, p. 30.

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paper, *La Voie Communiste*, which, oddly enough, contained in the same issue an article by Mr Deutscher. These facts were given in articles published in the *Guardian* (19, 20, 24 July 1961) and *Est et Ouest* (1961, Nos. 262, 263). In replying (in the *Sunday Times*, 23 July, and the *Guardian*, 26 July), Deutscher assured his readers that he had not used the document from *La Voie Communiste* (aware of its existence though he was), his own document was different, and had been obtained from a source he was unable to disclose, and he reiterated his belief in its authenticity. It was one of the less convincing examples of his dialectical skill.

The Dialectic of Political Ambiguity

At the funeral of Natalie Trotsky, several of the speakers referred to this tragic figure of a revolutionary Niobe, who lost her husband and sons through the vengeful terror of 'the great revolutionary despot'. Deutscher was one of them.

Describing the occasion in *France-Observateur* (1 February 1962), Maria Craipeau reported the following conversation:

> *Nous sommes fidèles, n'est-ce pas? m'a dit quelqu'un.*
> *Fidèles a quoi? Dis-moi, a quoi sommes-nous fidèles?*
> *Il me regarda, étonné.*
> *A notre jeunesse, non? A nous mêmes? Je ne sais pas, moi.*

Indeed, faithful to what?

All great men have their epigones and some of the epigones are not always faithful. In Deutscher's case this involved not so much the 'permanent revolution' as permanent ambiguity. Moral indignation, that inevitable companion of political idealism, is curiously inhibited in his writings, and this is strangely out of key in an author who can be so lyrical about his ultimate ideals. His formal disapproval of Stalinist iniquities is always coupled with an apologetic note, either in the form of retrospective determinism or of a prophecy that economic determinism will ensure a happy ending 'in the long run' (when, as Keynes said, we will all be dead). What is more, this moral ambivalence is matched by political equivocation. This equivocation is present whether it is a question of past or present, of Stalin and Trotsky, of Khrushchev and Mao, of the 'non-Jewish Jew' and the state of Israel, or of the 'objectively progressive' East and the 'formally democratic' West. When the Italian communist leader, Pajetta, pointed out that the persons who were prematurely telling the truth about Stalinism 'have not been very helpful to the revolution', Deutscher reverted to his old theme:

> I can agree with you on this point. Some years ago I wrote an essay about heretics and renegades directed against those ex-communists who exploited the truth about Stalinism, or rather part of the truth about Stalinism, to help reaction.

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More than that:

> We should indeed not forget that European social-democracy has a big responsibility for the birth of Stalinism, because by isolating and combating the Russian revolution it contributed to its degeneration.[39]

In short, the socialists first helped Stalinism to emerge, and then the ex-communists helped reaction by telling the truth about it.

Deutscher was no less liberal in his advice to Soviet Jews. Referring to their grievances, he said he believed that few would wish to emigrate, should the occasion offer, 'because the Soviet Union is evolving in the direction of a genuine Socialist democracy', and even now we are witnessing the beginnings of a resurgence of communist internationalism which 'must provide a source of hope to Jews of all political convictions' (*Jewish Chronicle*, 14 November 1958).

The 'friend of Israel' is no less generous in his friendly advice to the West, but here his loyalties are even less divided. Although Deutscher is not too clear-cut about it, there can really be little doubt on which side his sympathies are in what he himself termed the 'great contest'. As communism is bound to win, because it is both desirable and historically inevitable (this is never made quite explicit), it is not surprising that his policy recommendations tend to weaken the West and strengthen the Soviet Union, and that they usually coincide with the policies currently advocated in Moscow. What is rather more bizarre than the picture of Deutscher offering solemn advice to the 'capitalist side' on how to handle the situation 'intelligently', is the sight of people devoted to the survival of the West looking for guidance to a man whose sympathies and political philosophy indicate that it should go under.

For two decades now, Mr Deutscher has been defending the Soviet moves on the international scene which shifted the balance of power in favour of the Soviet bloc, and if his advice had been taken it would have shifted even further to the West's disadvantage. At the time of Yalta he argued that Stalin was not an imperialist because the Soviet Union had no economic motives for expansion. Later on he could not maintain that the subjugation of 100 million East Europeans happened in a 'fit of absent-mindedness', so he found that it was an expression of Stalin's policy of self-containment (*Russia after Stalin*, p. 78–9). After Stalin's death he still believed that while the practice of imperialism had secured surplus profits to capitalists, 'an exactly opposite development is taking place within the Soviet bloc' (*Partisan Review*, No. 4. 1956, p. 514). But now he dispels doubts about the sincerity of the Soviet commitment to the *status quo* in a different way[40]:

> Can the Soviet government be trusted to refrain from aggression? Will it not, circumstances permitting, seek to dominate Western

[39] *Espresso* (Milan), 14 and 21 November 1961.

[40] *The Great Contest*, pp. 51–2. Cf. also the *Manchester Guardian*, 5, 7, 9 April and 29 December 1954.

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> Germany? Is the urge for conquest not inherent in communism and Soviet power politics? Such questions, based on the experience of imperialist conquest, were still partly relevant to Stalin's policy; but they bear, in my view, little or no relation to the new phase of Soviet diplomacy and to its power-political background.

Shortly after the sputnik propaganda started pouring from every medium of communication, and not long before Khrushchev's Berlin nuclear-rocket-rattling, Deutscher declared that

> It is to the credit of Khrushchev's government that, on the whole, it has not tried to exploit the sputniks and luniks to foster a mood of arrogance and agressiveness, a mood which, unfortunately, was not absent from the West during the years of the American monopoly in atomic power.

Advising the West to accept disarmament without controls, the historical materialist, who preached in and out of season that economic growth must bring political freedom in the Soviet Union, now discovered that in the great contest 'ultimately the challenge is a spiritual one'.[41]

After a careful analysis of Deutscher's sayings and writings, precious little remains of critical independence and historical impartiality; and this explains the suspicion that all his protestations of liberalism and objectivity, justified by occasional reservations and reluctant strictures, are nothing but a mask necessitated by 'bourgeois' journalism and academic convention. Deutscher appears to be at bottom unable to shed his dogmatic style of thinking and cannot understand free thought unbound by a body of scriptures. A heretic is after all only a rebel against a particular interpretation of dogma, not against orthodoxy as such. His vision of Soviet affairs is essentially simplistic. Despite the difference in political sophistication, it does not deviate all that much from that of the Red Dean, Hewlett Johnson. Deutscher's sense of reality is of course too strong to permit him to project his vision on to the present, as Hewlett Johnson does, so he projects it on to the future. But although in his case there is no complete substitution of reality by a vision, his prophecies tend to overlap with his diagnoses.

His analysis of Soviet developments is thus essentially a continuation of the tradition which in the twenties and thirties made so many innocents believe every word of Stalinist propaganda. He is far from being a simpleton *à la* Hewlett Johnson, but he remains a *simplificateur*. As an analyst he permits his opinions to interfere with his perception of reality too much to provide a picture that is not a caricature. It is not just a question of a 'normal' amount of bias which is probably unavoidable, but of an addiction to myth-making which prevents a sober analysis of Soviet affairs.

Forty-five years after the revolution it is high time to look at it as a fact of life, and not as an elixir of life. In the approach to Soviet

[41] *The Great Contest*, pp. 41–2, 62, 78.

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affairs the double dangers of chiliastic faith and political paranoia are always present. There is a certain symmetry between the tendency of a revolutionary prophet to whitewash Soviet reality because of his simple faith, and the attitude of an anti-communist diehard who can never recognise any changes in it, because he looks at it only through the spectacles of the 'conspiracy theory of history'. The one sees liberalism and democracy where they do not exist, the other may refuse to recognise the reality of the Sino-Soviet conflict because of his 'demonological' preconceptions. Deutscher often tries to present his *lettres de crédence* of objective moderation by pointing out his opposition to diehard Stalinists and die-hard anti-communists, but truth is not a matter of equidistance from misconceptions.

Objectivity and a realistic attitude to facts cannot be based on a prophetic approach, but only on sober critical analysis. The picture that emerges is of a man who takes himself much too seriously as an analyst, who is careless about evidence, always ready to shift the argument to prove his oracular prescence, reluctant to admit an error, more concerned with the recovery of faith than with the discovery of truth. Granting his undoubted talents as a littérateur, his vivid style and historical imagination, a careful reader finds that as a political analyst he fails just too often, and we can only hope that in the long-run *some* of his prophecies come true (in the short-run they are politically self-defeating); as a *homo politicus* he is less than candid; as a phrophet he was, and still is, in demand because he constantly provides a political anodyne in a dangerous world, where his own private unpuzzled vision of the communist wave of the future coincides with a universal longing for peace which induces many people to look at Soviet affairs through rose-coloured spectacles, thus assuaging their anxieties. He satisfies the hankering after the chiliastic myth and enhances the allurement of peace at any price by providing a simplified *rationale* for wishful thinking. These attitudes, as we know, are quite widespread; *mundus vult decipi* is still a relevant maxim.

(The second part of this study, on Mr Deutscher's historical writings, will appear in a forthcoming issue of SURVEY.)

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ON READING TERTZ

Stefan Bergholz

THE OFFICIAL panegyrist of Justinian and Theodora, the historian Procopius of Caesarea, left behind secret chronicles in which he had put down all their crimes and obscenities.

The identity of the author of *Historia Arcana* was discovered only centuries later—Justinian's MVD were amateurs.

This is a classical case and example of 'drawer literature'.
Does 'drawer literature' exist in the USSR?

Who is Abram Tertz?

Who is Abram Tertz, the author of the book *The Trial Begins*, which was smuggled out of the USSR, and the collection of *Fantastic Tales*? Is he a Soviet citizen? Even a quick glance at his works shows beyond doubt that he is: no one could invent such details of everyday life, or such nuances of phraseology.

Is he really an Abram (or an Isaac, or something of that sort)? The elementary rules of conspiracy would demand that an Abram should call himself Ivan Ivanovich and vice versa; a genuine Ivan Ivanovich could not invent a better nom de guerre in such an anti-semitic country.

But there exists a higher type of conspiratorial behaviour, practised by Chesterton's 'man who was Thursday', or by the commercial travellers on the train in the well-known Jewish anecdote. What sensible person will believe that 'Abram Tertz' is indeed an Abram, in such an anti-semitic country? Thus we find in Tertz Jewish *mutterwitz* as well as truly Muscovite sarcasm, and Jewish hysteria side by side with *muzhik* coarseness. Thus the question, is Tertz a Jew or not, remains unanswered.

In his introduction to *The Trial Begins*, G. Herling-Grudzinski presents Tertz as a young writer, representative of today's Soviet youth.

Indeed, *The Trial Begins* appears to be at first glance the outburst of a young talent. Rather like Hlasko. On the other hand, there is the anonymous essay, also written by Tertz (identical theses, here and there the same phrases) which shows long reflection and a solid humanist background. But then we must remember that this era belongs to the *Wunderkind*, as was so well shown by the young Polish humanists on the morrow of the thaw.

Perhaps then he is not young?

But then Tertz has not been either at the front or in a prison camp, for if he had been he could not have resisted the haunting urgency of those experiences. Still, he shows an excellent knowledge of MVD men's ways and behaviour, of their slogans; his descriptions of their booze-ups are exactly right, he has created a capital middle-ranking MVD officer, Colonel Tarasov ("The Icicle"), who is worthy of occupying a place in Shchedrin's gallery of police chiefs.

Could it be then that Abram Tertz has done time in an internal prison of the MVD? Or could he have been hauled up for interrogation in the period of the personality cult? This would cast doubt on the suggestion that he is a young man.

Is he young or not? His works, like oracles, give an ambiguous answer.

Does Tertz's pseudonym conceal a well-known writer, or at any rate one whose work has been published at home, or a beginner?

It can be said that his style is eclectic, that he is not fastidious in his choice of artistic methods, and that he speaks at times in the tremulous tones of a fledgling, all of which would indicate that he is a beginner. But there are other points which weaken the force of this argument: the need for him to cover his traces, to affect an alien style, certain assumed traits of character, the influence

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of certain Russian literary traditions, from the pedlar's broadsheet through Dostoevsky and Leskov to Sologub.

What is more significant is that we find in Tertz, side by side with the clumsy and the primitive, brilliantly written pages. For instance, the dream in 'Ice'. Tertz has undoubtedly read Poe, and very likely Kafka. But what sets him above the hordes of their imitators and the post-Freudian inventors of dreams is a simplicity all his own and the undeniable authenticity of his dream passages.

We find in Tertz side by side with undeniable kitsch, perfect compositions ('The Lodgers', 'You and I').

Of course, this alternation between banalities and sublimities, kitsch and inspiration, is often the mark of a prolific and talented, but nonetheless amateur writer who has not yet served his apprenticeship. Often—but not necessarily. The story 'The Graphomaniacs' gives an insight into these matters and into a neglected aspect of literary life in the USSR.

At international gatherings Soviet men of letters always astound their Western colleagues with their editions running into millions, their *dachas*, their Zis cars. In principle, of course, members of the Union of Soviet Writers are maintained by the State, as in old Byzantium, with little reference to the quantity and quality of their output. But how many of the—let us say—10,000 or so members of the Union are the possessors of an unlimited bank account? A few, certainly. How many own *dachas*? A few hundred? But what of the others?

In 'The Lodgers' a drunken writer, sketched with the discreet and warm intimacy of a self-portrait—real or imaginary—occupies a mean corner in a communal apartment and lives neglected and painfully alone. The 'Graphomaniacs' contains an interesting revelation: hordes of aspirants to fame and fabulous incomes wear out the doorsteps of magazines and publishing houses; veteran colonels decked with medals, 'old women in pince-nez *à la* Chekhov who write on pig-breeding, youthful neophytes with Pushkinesque curls who imitate Esenin'. Some of them are probably talented.

As a rule nothing is heard about the existence in the USSR of a mass of graphomaniacs—there are no ruined lives and aspirations in that country, because there can be none, just as there are no unsuccessful sputnik trials. Yet it is a universal phenomenon, and in Russia surely commoner than anywhere else. The publicity which surrounds 'engineers of souls' has given literature as a career that glamour which the screen enjoys elsewhere.

Where then must we look for Abram Tertz? Amongst the renowned luminaries, the starving men of letters, or the graphomaniacs?

This book gives off a penetrating and undeniably genuine odour of resentment, of past disappointments, humiliations, envy—the hell of the *déclassé* intellectual, and the unhappiest specimen of that genus—the unsuccessful or disappointed man of letters. Tertz's texts could serve as material for a *Letters from the Underworld* of our time.

Is Tertz then an amateur or a well-known writer?

We have arrived at no answer to this. Or to any other of the many questions we have asked.

Still, if it were possible to give an answer, the author of these lines, for obvious reasons, would not entrust his investigations to paper.

Tertz and Soviet Ideology

I have defined Tertz as an exponent of Soviet 'drawer literature', i.e. as a typical free voice from the other side, typical not only in style, temperament, etc., but in his whole intellectual and emotional posture.

Tertz is not only the analyst of his country's particular situation, but also its product. He has unconsciously taken over from the ideologists of Marxism that imprecision and ambiguity in basic concepts and premises which they deliberately exploit, and which enables them to draw conclusions to suit the needs and requirements of the moment. He applies a great variety of paralogical

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procedures from the well stocked communist (or progressive) arsenal of ideological weapons.

According to Tertz, an end is the effective cause of any human act, and all particular ends are subordinated to one general End.

Soviet teleologism (or finalism) so sensitively described by Tertz, has left a mark on him. Its lowest and most commonly encountered form is this: the end is beautiful, but it is perverted in practice. This extremely simplified variant is current mainly in so-called reactionary circles.

The Tertzian variant is different. It relies on the same semantic abuse but it aims high and appeals to leftists, disenchanted and progressive alike. The perversions in practice attain the level of a fatal 'law of history' which is inseparable from the human condition. This variant could be summed up as follows: the Means necessary to achieve the End, in the course of achievement reshape the End into its very opposite, and in precisely this way all civilisations are created.

It is basically a correct observation that in the course of a struggle people lose sight of their reasons and their ends and invent mythical substitutes for them. But the semantic abuse in Tertz lies in the fact that, following the Marxists, he uses 'End' to cover different and sometimes contradictory meanings: end-intention and end-ideal, the final end and the immediate object, campaign slogans and historical vectors (which Ruth Benedict calls the trend of civilisation), the point of departure and the point of arrival; the end as bait and the practical end of a strategic plan. The tragic tirade of Tertz: 'In order that prisons may vanish forever we have built new prisons', should properly read like this: 'The Bolsheviks have raised new prisons, although they promised to abolish prisons', etc., from which one could only conclude that the Bolsheviks are perverse, or that external objective circumstances have forced them to renounce their original ends, but from which we cannot derive, as Tertz does, a generalisation about the diabolical dialectic of human history.

This is not a dispute about words, for Tertz's faulty reasoning gives rise to his theses:

(a) that Bolshevism on a world scale is inescapable, since it comes to replace a worn-out civilisation;

(b) that the October Revolution was to begin with right and good and remained so for the first few years (necessity, goodness, correctness are Hegelian synonyms in the Soviet world), but degeneration inevitably set in, for such is the general law of history;

(c) finally, the thesis that the new Soviet civilisation is still young and, like all others, must go through the phase of torment, blood, and 'mire' (the famous 'price of social progress'), but is nevertheless new and creative.

A further consequence of this Tertzian theory is an inability to see ahead ('The End' has become a meaningless phrase, but has not ceased to drive us further and further forward to an unknown destination), as well as a basic doubt, however much he sighs for another revolution, whether any universal aspiration or ideal, and this includes socialist ideals, could ever be realised.

There are grounds for supposing that such is more or less the attitude of a 'typical' Soviet intellectual when he has broken the bonds of doctrine. The pessimistic fatalism of the Tertzes is a reply to the official 'catastrophic optimism' in which all the world and his wife are required to believe.

The communists have developed to perfection the art of false analogies, the game of presenting one and the same concept now absolutely, now relatively, according to needs and circumstances, the procedure of false identification.

In this field, too, Tertz is their involuntary pupil. Volumes have been written about civilisations, their decline and their succession. Tertz has very likely read Buckle, whose works are popular in Russia, but probably has no first-hand knowledge of Gibbon, certainly not of Vico, Gobineau, or Spengler; his views have a somewhat naive flavour, but in spite (and because) of it are very widely held.

It is worth mentioning in passing that there must exist some pattern according to which ideas gradually acquire a new shape as they are put on the market.

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The process begins among the professional popularisers, then the reshaped ideas pass into the 'contemporary atmosphere', from which they inspire those lively intelligences which understand, and oversimplify, everything at a glance, writers for instance. It is always after some delay that the masses pick up these floating ideas and refashion them in their turn: this is to some extent an independent process, but the writers play a considerable role as middlemen, and this explains the extent of their practical influence, which Stalin noted. In the dark and painful course of modification and in exact reproduction, something useful to the masses, something which expresses or gives coherence to their social consciousness, is stripped of entangling sophistication. Let me stress that I am not talking here about semi-intellectual vulgarisations and caricatures, but about the form in which the ideas are taken over by the public. We have seen this happen in our time in the case of Bergsonism, relativism, Freudianism, and, of course, Marxism.

Let us return to Tertz.

His reasoning relies on the very popular analogy between the transition from ancient civilisation to Christianity, and the transition in our own time from an individualistic to a collective civilisation. Tertz argues further that, like all the others, this new collective communist civilisation must go through a stage of darkness, distortions, and sacrifices. He concludes that just as Christianity, in spite of everything (the Inquisition, etc.), did create what was still a Christian civilisation, so communism, in spite of everything (Stalinism, socialist realism, etc.), is in the process of creating a new civilisation which is still communist in character.

The analogy between the beginning of Christianity and present-day communism is a superficial one, that is, it depends on coincidences and similarities which are not decisive. But before we go any further let us look more closely at something else, namely, the dialectical game which I mentioned before, of 'absolute and relative'. Here the legerdemain of Leninists and Stalinists is shown most clearly in the following way: some groups of concepts are made absolute or hypostasised (the basic concepts of dialectical materialist ontology, the concept of the Party as a hypostasis of the proletariat or of historical progress, etc.), while other groups of concepts, such as social justice, peace, freedom, brotherhood, etc.—in a word the concepts which express the socialist inspiration in its oldest form, are sometimes absolute, and at other times extremely relative. This is connected with the 'all or nothing' type of thinking. For example, Lenin wrote in 1919 or thereabouts: 'They say that we have no freedom of the press. But does it exist in the capitalist world? We have freed the press from capitalist oppression' (I am quoting from memory). Here freedom is first presented absolutely and then relatively. How much more brutal is the jest of the once notorious Ultramontanist L. Veuillot: 'We demand for ourselves freedom of the press because it follows *your* principles, but when we are in power we shall abolish freedom of the press because this follows from *our* principles.' The communists express themselves much more cautiously and delicately—'when the need arises'—they say. *Passons.* What is to be learned from this? Freedom is absolutised and then it is stated that such absolute freedom does not, and never did, exist anywhere, and in the last resort there is a Tertzian cry of 'Where can you find a free personality, you scoundrels?'

Tertz and Socialist realism

If we are not to get lost in the confusion which has arisen around socialist realism, we must always keep our eyes on its functions, if only because it is *par excellence* and perforce a functional trend. At the very beginning we come across two primary and unambiguous concepts: Stalin's description, 'engineers of souls' (he had an undeniable talent for coining catch-phrases); also, 'social demand' ('political' would be more correct). Let us stop to think what are the functions of an engineer and what methods he uses, and what are the functions and exigencies of 'demand', and we shall find a valuable thread through the labyrinth.

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In the light of these concepts, Stalin's apt description, our analysis of Doctrine and System, and past experience, we can without hesitation list the most important aspects of the function of socialist realism:

(a) The hagiographic function: glorification of the Party, of the Russian people, of the Soviet state, the camp of socialism and peace; and, on the other hand, the Manichean vilification of the capitalist hell, and the defence of the masses against the corrupting influence of its ideology. And on the side: paternalist pedagogy, tolerant towards potential allies, hard on those who are already allies.

(b) A *Domostroy* in pictures—rules for every-day behaviour in private life, at work, in public life, the model and prototype of the exemplary citizen (the positive hero), an intensive social pedagogy, operating by suggestion and magic rather than by rational means, mobilising people 'for' and 'against'.

(c) Opium for the people—optimistic mirages (even tragedy must be optimistic), monumental in form—'Third Rome', the pomp of Russian autocracy—and populist in content.

Thus socialist realism makes possible communication to the widest public; socialist-realist literature, with its deliberately cultivated primitivism, is easily read and understood by the broad masses; even the illiterate are reached—this is the function of painting.

Socialist-realist works then are accessible to the widest masses, but they are modelled on the parvenu and typically petit-bourgeois tastes—their morphology is well known—of the ruling class which creates the demand.

Western writers make a mistake when they accuse their Soviet colleagues (as for instance at the meeting in Venice in 1958) of betraying Russian literary traditions. The accusation would be correct if only the so-called critical realism of the nineteenth century was taken into consideration, but is incorrect if we consider the pseudo-classical period, or even the reactionary literature of the nineteenth century which is less well known in the West.

It is a particularly sad mistake to ascribe the vileness of socialist realism to the caprices and petit-bourgeois tastes of Zhdanov or Stalin, although they did undoubtedly have some effect on details. The form and the content as well as the modalities are here logically connected with the System, as well as with basic national character. Similar causes in similar situations produce similar effects, as we have seen before. Thus, we have first the foundation of a Muscovite state, theocratic in its aspirations, then the rise of a modern imperial state, then the establishment of a communist empire.

The famous nomination of Mayakovski as the 'leading poet of the socialist epoch' shows how easily Stalin could stifle his own preferences and tastes. But for this nomination the poet would have shared the fate of his brilliant colleague Khlebnikov. And surely Mayakovski must have appeared more repellent to Stalin than to Lenin, who did, after all, have an all round education, and must certainly have been more incomprehensible to him. (He remains incomprehensible to the majority of Soviet intellectuals to this day, although his poems are learned by heart in schools.)

Similarly, for reasons of state, Stalin saved Sholokhov from his vulturine colleagues by roundly stamping *Quiet flows the Don* with the seal of socialist realism, although this novel is really a rejection of the objectives which determine the socialist-realist trend.

Mayakovski fought passionately against petit-bourgeois tastes (*Lef*), denounced with equal fury the banality of the later Gorki, and the loathsome confections of the beauty merchants, suffering an unbroken series of defeats which culminated in his suicide.

Tertz then is mistaken (or does he mean it ironically?) when he seeks 'ways out and the possibility to create authentic literature' within the framework of the System. He is wrong in thinking that it is possible to escape literary bankruptcy by revealing the fundamental contradiction between the two components of socialist realism—between realism's preoccupation with factual knowledge and 'socialist' teleological aspiration. This very contradiction . . . is the base of the System's philosophy. But Moscow is not afraid of contradictions.

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Tertz is wrong in his opinion that the chief obstacle to the creation of great art—in general and within the framework of the System—is eclecticism. Their undeniable eclecticism did not prevent Baroque or even Gothic from becoming great art.

Tertz is partly right in saying that art is not afraid of dictatorship. But it depends on the nature of the dictatorship, the time, and the art in question. I have mentioned before the factor that makes all the difference: whether or not the artist integrally believes, whether he is first a believer and then an artist, whether he himself accepts and desires unconditional obedience—from love of God, of Christ, of Buddha, for only love makes such obedience possible.

The emergence of a great religious art, such as Tertz longs for, is unaffected by the choice between eclecticism or purity of style, craftsmanship or naiveté, the realistic or grotesque-fantastic approach . . . . What is surely quite indispensable is a certain *état de disponibilité*.

Whom does Abram Tertz represent?

He is certainly not the voice of the masses: neither of the satisfied minority nor of the dissatisfied majority. These last know nothing of the cult of the Revolution—on the contrary, they obstinately idealise times gone by, and if they believe in anything it is in the mission of holy Russia which Stalin understood and adapted to his own purposes in the war years, and on which Khrushchev so unerringly plays to-day.

Instead, Tertz expresses the views and moods of a probably small independently thinking section of Soviet youth. His vision of Soviet reality is their vision, his attitude is their attitude, he expresses their not entirely clear consciousness of their own situation. Their inability to escape from the sophistic intellectual procedures of the Doctrine, their emotional taboos, and their shrinking from agonised reappraisal which would take them right back to the sources. (It is easy to talk of thoroughgoing reappraisal, but how painful and terrifying to an honest Russian would be the verdict that it was all useless, that it would never lead anywhere.) Their fatalism as a way out of the trap. Their total engagement—they are probably the only people in the USSR who are engaged in the proper sense of the word. Their aversion to the cold-blooded cerebral nihilism of the West, their eternally ambivalent Russian attitude to the West. Their need for a simple human non-dialectical morality. Their puritanical reserve towards the Western *roman charogne* and dehumanised abstraction, and at the same time their allergy to the style of Soviet life and art. Their passionate need for freedom—not Western style freedom, cerebral and lonely, an essentially private value, but a positive and tangible social freedom.

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YOU AND I

Abram Tertz

'And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.' Genesis, xxxii, 24.

1

FROM THE VERY first this affair had a strange flavour. On the pretext of celebrating his silver wedding anniversary, Genrikh Ivanovich Graube invited four colleagues, including you, to his apartment, and he pressed you to come that evening so much that it seemed as though your presence was the main concern of the get-together.

'I shall be mortally offended if you don't come', he said with emphasis and fixed you with his eyes, which were like convex lenses. There was an icy, hypnotic glint in them.

Realising that you must not give away your suspicions too soon—or else he would sense them and take measures which you hadn't thought of and which would certainly be even more cunning—you politely accepted. You even congratulated Graube on his bogus anniversary. His reasons for inviting you were obscure, but your heart was heavy with foreboding.

Sure enough, as soon as you came in the guests leapt from the chairs to which they had been rooted while waiting for you to appear. Two of your colleagues—Lobzikov and Polyansky—winked at each other in delight.

'Here he is!'

'Let's begin!'

With these words they betrayed their treacherous designs, and to cover up, the host, Genrikh Ivanovich, was forced to motion them all to the table. But you gave not the slightest sign of attaching any importance to the ominous phrase 'Let's begin!', as though these words blurted out by Graube's henchmen had nothing suspicious about them and conveyed only an innocent invitation to eat and drink.

'Let us raise our glasses!' you shouted very loudly and with all the gaiety you could muster. 'Let us hope that this silver wedding will be followed by a golden one! Cheers!'

They all raised and clinked their glasses, but in view of the circumstances, you dashed your vodka under the table at that favourable moment when the rest, rolling their eyes, were downing the stuff in honour of Genrikh Ivanovich Graube and his imaginary spouse.

Yes, the wife and hostess at this gathering was neither one thing nor the other, but an imposter. As likely as not it was a man in disguise. He had been carefully washed and made up with powder and lipstick and had now been produced as a lady with twenty-five years of marital service. This explained the look of disgust on Graube's face as he kissed her—or rather him—in full view, as a token of conjugal bliss, on the sinewy pouted lips. There was no sacrifice these people wouldn't make in order to lure you into their spider's web and destroy you!

The drink alone must have cost 280 rubles or so, to say nothing of the roast duck, pickled mushrooms, and sturgeon. And for dessert, they had no doubt bought a nut-cake, biscuits of different kinds, and the sweets, even if they were only boiled ones, would have cost at least two rubles twenty apiece. And then what about the butter, the sugar and the bread? . . .

All in all they must have paid 800 rubles at the very least. Or ten thousand, if you took into account that the men playing the part of women (the wives of Lobzikov and Polyansky were also probably fakes) had to be fixed up with dresses and scent of one sort or another, even though they were in their own, standard-issue, underwear—but, there again, it might have been bought, fancy stuff with lace to make everything look completely natural, in case they had to get a bit flirtatious. . . .

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And the whole of this large sum, in the region of fifteen thousand, had been drawn from the bank all because of you. And you were even a little proud as you mentally totted up the expense, though all the time you remembered that things were very bad for you, if the estimate had been passed and the money allocated.

The guests ate rapidly, clicking their knives and forks and thereby communicating with each other in a secret code, like Morse. 'Let's begin! Let's begin!', was being tapped out by the impatient Polyansky, who had long had a grudge against you because the head of the department, acting on higher orders, had put up your salary and not his—quite rightly too.

And Lobzikov, whose friendship with Polyansky was based on the proverb 'one good turn deserves another', seized a large portion of duck in both hands and bit off the side to indicate that, metaphorically speaking, a similar fate was in store for you as well. On receiving this intelligence, the guests, smacking their greasy lips, tapped their knives on their plates in chorus: 'You as well! You as well!' But Genrikh Ivanovich Graube, who was sitting at the head of the conspirators, shook his head slightly and, with a meaning look, took a sip from his glass, in which the remains of his drink still gleamed. This was his way of saying that they must bide their time for half an hour or so, until you were too drunk to notice what was going on.

Then Vera Ivanovna Graube, or rather, the man made up as Vera Ivanovna, said to you in words whose meaning was crystal-clear:

'Why isn't our modest friend eating anything and why isn't he drinking at all?'

He said this in a high-pitched, girlish voice, as though he really was a woman. This virtuoso performance took a lot of trouble and it was quite out of keeping with his general appearance, which was that of a heavy-weight boxer.

'Ah', he said feelingly, so that his vocal chords almost broke, 'You know, I got these ducks at the Vagankov market. Where can you find any decent food in the shops nowadays?'

At this provocative question the guests stopped chewing and stared at you, impatiently waiting for your reply. One word of sympathy, and it would all have been over. Graube's ears, sticking out like headphones on both sides, hung over the table. His eyes, like a sniper's, roved microscopically over your face. As if this wasn't enough, you suddenly felt as though somebody, invisible and all-seeing, looked at you at this moment (was it through the windows, or through the wall?) and at all those present, who were sitting bolt upright in front of their plates, as though they were posing for a group photograph.

Knowing that you could not be silent, or your silence would be taken for consent, for illegal complicity in subversion, you looked unblinkingly at the sculptured bridge of Graube's nose and said as clearly and crisply as you could:

'No!', you said, 'you are mistaken! Vera Ivanovna should not underestimate the distribution of supplies in our cities and villages. Duck, chicken, even geese, and even the rarest bird in the world, the turkey, are sold in sufficient quantity in all the shops, as much as you like!'

A sigh of disappointment, yet at the same time of a certain relief, went through the room. Graube blushed and said, his nerves strained to the utmost:

'Turkey, turkey, gobbledegook. . .'.

He was going to add something just as nonsensical and ambiguous, but Lobzikov made a hissing noise through his broken tooth. This was the signal for retreat. The guests looked down at their plates or at the table-cloth. And the all-seeing eye which had been watching them all squinted mockingly at the luckless spies and dissolved in a yellow patch, the colour of the wall-paper, as though it had never been there.

2

IT WAS SNOWING and the snow fell on my eyelashes, on my cap, making it even fluffier, and on the roofs. If you narrowed your eyelids, tiny snow-houses appeared between them. The light of the street-lamps shone through them

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brightly, creating an aurora borealis. It would fill the sky and then sink down and gradually melt away. My field of vision dissolved in a blinding flood and a yellow tear, mixed with glittering snow, dropped from my eye onto my nose, the street-lamps and the roofs, also covered with snow like thatched cottages.

Whenever I caught a tear in time and wiped it away with my glove, nature proved to me once again that the snow was still falling and would go on falling for a long time, perhaps for ages and ages. This was one of those blissful moments when nobody knows for certain what the time is, because the sky, falling down to earth as snow, could safely pass for day, on account of its brightness, and also for night—for the opposite reason. Most likely it was an early winter morning which had dragged on into evening. One wanted to lie down and sleep, burying one's head in a snow-drift, and to find, on waking up, that the snow was still falling and had stopped the passage of time.

I was thrilled by the weather. If I had been a twelve-year-old boy like Zhenka, hurrying down Kirov Street with his skates under his arm, I should have thought that I was going home to a Christmas tree with golden tinsel and a picture-book. A similar anticipation of secret delight was aroused in Nikolai Vasilyevich by a certain brunette, as he hurried slightly drunk through the cold, firmly believing that she would receive him in her well-heated room, as she had done twice before, to their mutual satisfaction, and why, he thought to himself, should there be a hitch the third time, since the cognac was already doing its work and the brunette had many secret charms of a specific nature?

Gradually, through the snowdrifts and the walls, and also through Nikolai Vasilyevich's back, which, pierced by electric light, receded down a slope towards the brunette, a panorama unfolded before me.

It was snowing. A fat woman was picking her teeth. Another fat woman was gutting a fish. A third was eating meat. Two engineers were playing a Chopin duet. Four hundred women were simultaneously giving birth in the maternity homes.

An old woman was dying.

A coin fell under a bed. A father said, laughing, 'O, Kolya, Kolya!' Nikolai Vasilyevich was racing through the cold. The brunette was douching herself in a basin in readiness for their meeting. A woman with auburn hair was putting on trousers. Three miles away, her lover—also called Nikolai Vasilyevich for some reason—was sneaking through a blood-stained flat with a suitcase in his hands.

An old woman was dying—a different one this time. Goodness me, the things they were doing! Cooking sago pudding. Shooting out of guns and missing. Unscrewing bolts and weeping. Zhenka was rubbing his cheeks, his skates pressed under his arm. A shop-window was smashed. A woman with auburn hair was putting on trousers. A door-keeper spat with disgust and said: 'Here they are! They've come!'

Racing with a suitcase in a basin in readiness for the meeting. Unscrewing cheeks from a gun, giving birth to an old woman and laughing: 'Here they are! They've come!' A brunette was dying. Zhenka was dying and being born. A girl with auburn hair was playing Chopin. And another girl with auburn hair—the seventeenth in succession—was putting on trousers.

The whole point was the synchronisation of these acts, each one of which had no meaning by itself. All these people were unaware of each other and, what is more, they did not know that they were details in a picture composed by me as I looked at them. Little did they know that their every move was under observation and liable to careful investigation at any moment.

It's true that some of them were troubled by conscience, but they had no way of sensing that I was watching them all the time directly, penetratingly and vigilantly, never taking my eyes off them. In their ignorance they behaved very naturally, perhaps, but also most shortsightedly. . . .

Suddenly my eye met an obstacle and jumped as though it had been hit. This was a man whom one could not fail to notice. In the empty, snow-swept street he attracted attention by constantly looking over his shoulder. Even

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indoors, surrounded by food and drink, receiving the hospitality of a kindly host, he behaved like a criminal who might be caught and unmasked at any moment.

He was in no danger of any sort and I tried to figure out what it was that gave him this foreboding of my presence. He must have caught some sharp look of mine and squirmed under it without realising what it was all about and ascribing to the people round him a power which they didn't have. He had a hunch that he was being watched, and I *was* watching him, but he thought it was *they*. I found this very funny. I concentrated on him and took a close-up of him in the bright focus of my eye. He was like a germ under a microscope and I examined him down to the last pathetic detail.

He was ginger-haired and had a pale, delicate face of the sort which never gets sunburnt, though it was dotted here and there with faded freckles which also thickly covered the backs of his hands and merged in solid-dark patches on his fingers. He was nattily dressed, with a crease in his trousers, a new tie and clean socks, which for a batchelor of his age was a sign of secret pride, if not of a fondness for women.

This impression, however, soon turned out to be wrong. Taking them for men, he showed no interest in the women round the table, except perhaps for Lida, the librarian, who was sitting on his right. He knew her from the Ministry library where he borrowed the journal 'K . . .' and detective novels in translation, and he had every reason to believe that she really was Lida the librarian, and not an imaginary agent.

Lida was also given to fantasies and, out of the kindness of her heart, and because of her youth, she never resisted any advance. Two years before Graube had had a brief affair with her and he had now invited her to his family party out of pity. She drank heavily and in silence, indifferent to what was going on.

This did not escape the attention of my charge. Emptying a second glass of vodka under the table, he leant over to her and said, so that everybody could hear:

'Lida, I love you!'

3

YOU HAD NEVER believed in loose living. In love you liked to be straightforward, never making empty promises or giving dubious vows, but paying modest fees of 25, 30, and sometimes 50 rubles in cash in return for the innocent reward which, by mutual agreement, was due to you. Like this you were spared scandals and court costs in these matters and, although Polyansky said that his wife cost him less than a prostitute, each session working out at about 15 rubles, you were convinced that it was better to pay too much than to be miserable for the rest of your life.

And if ever you were short of money, you could go for a month, or even a whole year, without getting involved with the Ministry typists. Invite one of them to the pictures and you'd have no end of trouble later on just for one lousy little pinch above the knee. One could never tell with an honest woman whether she would give in or not, and this uncertainty was always disturbing and demoralising. If only they would say 'No!' straight away and clear off.

And so when you bent over to Lida and suddenly began to make advances, it was the result of an extreme emergency. You had parried Graube's first attack with dignity, but you felt that he was still one up on you. At any moment there would be another offensive and you had to get in first at all cost.

It oftens happens that an elderly man, a solid citizen (say, a member of the Academy) comes to a party, drinks a couple of glasses and, before you know where you are, he is stuffing the silver into his pocket, reciting improper verses or sitting under the table and refusing to surface again. . . . Behaviour of this kind is always treated with indulgence. Well, that is, he'll get a ticking-off, people will laugh at him ('What do you mean, Vasya, you son of a bitch, dragging the honour of your uniform on the floor and casting a shadow on the Academy with your drunken mug?'). But at the same time they'll slap him on

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the shoulder, tell him not to worry, and stick up for him. All this because he is obviously one of them, didn't go to a good school before the revolution, and is as morally pure as Jesus Christ. A chap like that would never divulge a military secret or betray his country at a critical moment. He is immediately cleared of all suspicion and he has nothing in the world to worry about.

This was a situation which made you envious and you were trying to attain it with the help of Lida, the librarian, the only woman who could save your reputation. Finding her at your side, only a foot away from you, you exclaimed in sudden inspiration:

'Lida, I love you!'

The spies looked at each other in consternation, and Lida, not believing her ears, sat motionless. Her forlorn collar-bones protruded above her flat, décolleté breast. Her raised elbow looked like a duck's wing which had been picked clean.

'Lida, I love you!', you said again, even more loudly, and clasped her leg just above the knee with your limp hand.

'Not in front of all these people!', Lida whispered, and gratefully stroked the hand squeezing her leg. And so began your love-affair, in the midst of your game with death, in full view of your persecutors, who were quite put out by your sudden display of temperament.

You quickly put on a show of hectic activity. You grabbed the nicest titbits from under the noses of the other guests, and shouting 'This is for you!', you ostentatiously offered them to Lida, building up a barricade of food all round her. At the same time you shouted words of endearment at her:

'Lidikins! Liddlikins! Liddle-diddle-kiddlikins!'

Out of the corner of your eye you observed that all this was having some effect.

'We didn't know you were such a lad', said the spy who looked like a boxer and was playing the part of Graube's wife, with a forced laugh. 'We always thought you were such a quiet chap who keeps to himself . . .'

He had been very much shaken in all his calculations and suspicions, but he kept up his pretence of being Graube's wife.

'Nothing of the kind, Vera Ivanovna!' you answered hotly. 'What have I to hide? Who is there to hide from? I can tell you everything quite frankly: I'm an incredible lady-killer, particularly when I've had a drop too much.'

By way of proving the truth of these words, you went close up to him with a drunken stagger and, overcoming your natural shyness, you carefully touched the brown-and-orange spotted camouflage which had been attached to his breast. Just as you thought: it was simply an inflated rubber cushion.

'Oh, you are a one!', squealed the frightened spy, throwing himself back in his chair, probably to prevent a complete exposure of his true function. And, swaying from side to side, you returned to Lida and gently bit her elbow so that she wouldn't be jealous.

'Not in front of all these people!', she whispered in embarrassment. 'Let's go outside for a bit, if you really must . . .'

Graube had gone green with misery over the failure of his provocation. He would now certainly have to pay all the silver wedding expenses out of his own pocket.

'This is an insult!', he shouted to Lobzikov and Polyansky with feigned indignation. Swaying like metronomes, they shook with silent laughter.

'The passion of the man! No, really, what passion!', raved the boxer who called himself Vera Ivanovna.

At this moment you had another brilliant idea: to take advantage of the scandal and run off with Lida on the pretext of uncontrollable emotion. It happens after all: an outburst of passion, the atavistic call, sexual competition, Sigmund Freud, Stefan Zweig and all that. Just as drunks do when they want to pick a quarrel, you waved your arms at the company and said:

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'Lida, I am taking you away. Let's get out of here. Let them go on gossiping without me. It will be easier for them to run down the ducks provided by the state. What do they think I am? I'm alright, I'm loyal. But you, Genrikh Ivanovich—I can see straight through you.'

And you looked him right in the eye, with the same penetrating gaze he had used on you, as though he, and not you, were a marked man.

'Yes, yes, yes! I can see straight through you!'

Lida obediently gathered her things together, her handbag and her lipstick. You handed her her goatskin coat, which had lost two-thirds of its fur. You slammed the door in Graube's wide-eyed face. He stood there open-mouthed, evidently not having been empowered to detain you by force.

Thick snow-flakes were falling and they engulfed you and Lida in their silent myriads. It was as though millions upon millions of parachutists with snow-white parachutes were dropping from the sky and seizing the hushed town by a massive air-drop. Before landing, some of them circled round and round, choosing the softest possible spot. . . .

The snow prevented you from seeing the enemy's manoeuvres. He had become so wily that he was following hard on your heels under cover of the blanket of snow. You, in your black coat, stood out a mile away and your only cover was Lida. Graube had certainly sent experts after you to check up on what you would do when you were alone with her. He was shrewd enough not to take your lightning romance at its face value and so, as you walked down the street with Lida, you carried on as before, stumbling along like a drunk and making her various proposals, including even a proposal of marriage, so that all and sundry could hear.

Lida nestled up to you trustingly and looking down at her feet, she said with sobs of joy:

'Why didn't I meet you before, when I was still a girl of seventeen, but quite grown-up already?' . . .

But you couldn't have cared less about either her past or her future. You accepted her as she was, drunk and in love, with the motheaten fur on her breast which provided handy protection for your face, made haggard by all you had gone through. And as you spoke to her of love, you thought longingly of the sweet moment when you would see her home and return to your bachelor apartment to sleep with an easy mind in your clean and empty bed.

Now and again you stopped and, pulling her round with a sudden, impatient movement, kissed her on the lips and the eyelids, half-closed in bliss. And as you kissed her, you looked watchfully over her head, obligingly thrown back, into the murky distance beyond with its swirling snow and blackness.

You were under observation. But although you could not quite make out the expression in the eyes fixed on you from all sides, you were tempted to shout proudly to the whole world:

'Very well, look! I'm not afraid! You can see that I'm busy making love to my Lida and you've got nothing on me. . . .'

4

I'VE BEEN WATCHING him now for four days and nights. For him I am like the python whose cold-blooded stare can mesmerise a rabbit. His ideas about me are utter nonsense, but even if one takes his absurd fantasies as a starting point, I am not sure which one of us has the whip-hand. We are both prisoners, we are unable to take our glazed eyes off each other. And although he can't see me, the beam of fear and hatred trained on me from under those reddish eye-lashes is so strong that I want to shout:

'Stop it, or I'll swallow you! I only have to shut my eyes and you'll vanish like a fly!' The contest is beginning to weary me.

'Get it into your fat head that you are alive and breathing only while I look at you. You are only you, because that is how I address you. You are only a man because you have been seen by God. . . . Oh, you! . . .'

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He turned a deaf ear to all my friendly attempts at persuasion. He had his reasons for everything. For four nights running now he had not slept so as not to be caught unawares, but lay on his sofa ready for battle, in his jacket and trousers, staring into the darkness.

As a result of this intense scrutiny of the darkness, circles and spots of various colours appeared before him. They took the form of eyes: just eyes unattached to ears or noses. Goggling, staring, squinting eyes, brown, grey and blue ones, flitted round the room, fluttering their lashes and settling on his chest when they got tired. If he got up, they took off again and hovered above his head, blinking occasionally with their wings.

The mornings brought him no rest: he felt that he was even more conspicuous in the light of day. But for me there was really no difference between day and night. No screen or black-out could rid me of him. . . .

He felt particularly uncomfortable in the lavatory. Driven there by his pudendum, which he disliked and was ashamed to expose to view, he covered himself with a newspaper, pulled faces, whistled arias, and tried to arouse my curiosity by suddenly appearing to be sunk in thought. All this with one aim: to divert my attention to the region of his face and hold it there for a time. As though I could be taken in by this sort of nonsense! . . .

He was so nervous at the thought that I could see everything that his urine would not come, nor would the muscles of his rectum contract. I felt ashamed for him and at the sight of all these contortions I suffered with him on account of clumsiness.

If only it had been the persecution mania which sometimes afflicts highly gifted people with a sense of guilt and a feeling of being patently mediocre! The fact is that he more probably suffered from another disease, known to medicine as *mania grandiosa.* The whole world had only one aim, namely to make trouble for him personally. When he dashed out in the mornings to buy his bread and salami, he shamelessly referred everything he saw to himself. Moscow swarmed with people in disguise. They pretended not to look at him, but they were peeping at him all the time. They passed themselves off as casual passers-by and strolled along with vacant expressions, but for some reason they were all dressed in the same way, in uniform dark cloth shoes. Others were in white smocks, looking like women ice-cream sellers. Nobody ever bought anything from them.

But worst of all were the houses, those monsters with all their gaping windows. . . .

'What a pleasant coincidence! How are you? Still in Moscow? You haven't gone yet? And how's that ulcer?'

You turned round. It was Graube, of course, clutching you by the shoulder just outside the *Gastronom.* The day after the 'silver wedding', you had asked for leave from the Ministry on the pretext of stomach-trouble. Your colleagues had been told that you were going to Yalta on doctor's orders, but, of course, you were spending your leave locked up at home. Imagine the joy of the ubiquitous Graube catching you red-handed on the street, during a brief sortie for food, when you were supposed to be in Yalta! . . . While you tried to think of excuses for the delay in your departure, Graube unceremoniously put his arm round your waist and pulled you off the pavement. Another five steps and you were in a court-yard—an obvious trap—which was covered for some reason with piles of yellow snow. Graube must have been given authority for this.

'I know, I know! *Cherchez la femme.* No questions. We've all had a bit of fun in our day.'

He danced around you, as though he wanted to bite you, and wagged his finger at you, without however losing his grip on his bulky ministerial brief-case.

'I just wanted to have a word with you alone, old man. You really are a card, you know! The wife can't stop talking about it. It was enormous fun the other evening! What a laugh! You didn't think the old girl really meant it? She just likes to entertain visitors on roast duck, there's nothing more to it . . . I know you were only joking, I got it straight away. "I can see right

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through you ", you said. That was a good one! Pulling my leg, weren't you? Go down on my knees, if you like. No, it's alright, I'm only joking, don't get mad at me. Just a token of esteem. I haven't hurt your feelings, have I, old man? It's not because of Lida, is it? Forgive me, old fool that I am. I'll do anything for you. Let bygones be bygones. No hard feelings, and all that. You know how it is, I'm old enough to be your father. I just got in first, like Christopher Columbus. Ahead of both Lobzikov and Polyansky. But I'm sorry all the same—something just came over me. We've all had a bit of fun in our time, but you've got your principles, I see. All that about seeing right through me. Well, really, now, we can still be good friends! Honest, I'll go down on my knees, if you like. I wouldn't do it for anybody else in the world, just for you, as a token of esteem. Shall I? '

Before you could figure out the meaning of these words, Graube, hat and briefcase in hand, and with a quick look over his shoulder, dropped to his knees in the snow. His great, moon-like face, which had turned yellow in keeping with the surroundings, was sad and rueful.

For a moment you had a wild idea that *he* might be frightened of *you* and wanted to apologise. . . .

But you were not to be taken in. You were quick to see the higher strategy which lay behind this humiliating posture. One's defences are more easily penetrated from below. A man on his knees can grab you by the legs and throw you on your back.

So, without any more ado, you leapt aside with a shout and, seeing the look of astonishment on Graube's face, you hit him straight in the eye. . . . You turned round in the gateway. He was sitting in the snow with his brief-case lying flat in front of him. He was holding one side of his face with his hands, but he continued to look at you out of the other eye.

' Wait! Don't go away! You're wrong, I tell you ', he said, snivelling and whining. ' She's all yours. There's nothing to worry about. You're younger than me. Only you must look after your health. Just whistle, and she'll come running. Shall I tell her you've not gone to Yalta? She'll come running. Shall I tell her? ' But you didn't fall for that one. Forgetting about the salami you wanted to buy, you ran back home and locked yourself in.

5

LIDA CAME TO SEE you that same evening. She rang twice, but there was no answer. Through the letter-box she could see part of the hall, dimly lit and cluttered with household rubbish. A pair of legs stood at an angle. Lida recognised them by the shoes and trousers. Nothing else was visible.

' It's me—Lida! Open the door, Nikolai Vasilyevich! ' she shouted joyfully into the letter-box. To her surprise, the well-known legs did not budge. They were visibly shaking, but they made no move towards her. After a decent interval, Lida rang again.

The central heating was humming. A wireless was playing downstairs on the ground floor.

' Nikolai Vasilyevich! It's me—Lida. Why don't you say something? Do you think I can't see you? You're standing over there in the corner and you've got your Czechoslovak trousers on, half-worsted. Let me in for a moment.'

A switch snapped off in the hall and the light went out. Lida hovered in front of the door, wondering what to do.

' Are you angry because you promised to marry me? Well don't worry, that's not why I've come. I'm not bothered about the formalities. Honest. Why have you put out the light, Nikolai Vasilyevich? I can still hear everything. You're standing there and sighing. You ought to be ashamed of yourself! People have been telling tales about me, I suppose? Don't listen to them. I've had nothing to do with Lobzikov for the last four months. Nor with Polyansky. I've thought about nobody but you, since you went on leave. I haven't even kissed anyone. Honest. I'll be true to you all my life, Nikolai Vasilyevech, if you want. I'll love you for ever and ever, like a husband. I'll

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cook your meals, if you want.' Her eyes and her lips were glued to the door. There was silence inside. A warm and rather stuffy smell came through the narrow opening.

'So you don't want to pluck the rose?', she whispered, blushing scarlet. She then put her nose to the dark slit for the last time and went away.

Only when she had gone did you dare to move your numb limbs. You were feverish and bathed in sweat. How childish it would have been to rush out at a ring of the door-bell into the bright light! A blunder like that was more than your life was worth. Thank goodness that you had caught yourself in time and stopped dead, so that nobody could even tell you were there.

And what else could you have done? Let her in? Reveal your private life to the whole world? And with whom? With that very woman, as you now realised, who had been put on to you by Graube's orders! At the party already she had provoked you into a love-affair and you nearly. . . . You must get out of here! Get out before it's too late! Before she comes back and breaks in, claiming to be your ex-fiancée, who thinks it her duty to follow you everywhere, only because you once pinched her, in an unguarded moment, a couple of inches over the permitted line. . . .

You looked out of the window, hiding behind the casement and not switching on the light. There was no retreat. Lida was waiting down below. She had no intention of leaving you alone and she was pacing like a sentry in front of the house.

Your feet were swollen and painful inside your over-heated shoes. There was a throbbing pain in your hand, injured by that scoundrel Graube. But worst of all was the stinging, prickly sensation of your skin. You kept wincing, tossed your head and furiously rubbed your cheeks and forehead with the palms of your hands. . . . This wretched sight hurt my eyes. They were smarting pretty badly. I had a feeling that my eye-lids were propped open with matchsticks and that both eyeballs were bleeding from scratches.

To give myself some relief, and also to soothe the pain caused by my observation of him, I tried to look in a different direction and went walking in such distant streets as Maryina Roshcha and Bolshaya Olenya near Sokolniki park. But it didn't help. Wherever I went—on foot or by trolleybus—the same angry eyes and the same fingers, covered with freckles and red hairs, were always there in front of me. . . .

I knew well enough that the whole business might end badly. When I couldn't stand it any longer, I took a taxi and drove straight to the scene of the events.

My idea was to entice Lida from her post and thus to ease the situation. I thought I might reduce the number of eyes which he had concentrated on himself by dint of imagination. But this was not my only motive: I wanted to take my mind off things. I needed a third person to amuse me and protect me from my persecutor.

The selfless Lida was standing in the bitter cold under his darkened windows. Although we were acquainted only at second hand, as it were, I knew all her soft spots. It was only a matter of five minutes before I had got into conversation with her and invited her to a nearby café to warm up a little. I called myself by the first name that came into my head—Hypolite, I think. She agreed. She had nowhere else to go anyway.

While we were waiting for the *satsivi* and the *shashlyk*, I made one or two complimentary remarks, to cheer her up a bit.

'Why do you wear a beard?' she asked flirtatiously. 'To make you look a bit more important? But it makes you look old! And beards don't suit red-haired men anyway'.

'What do you mean, red-haired?' I was horrified at the ease with which she changed colours to suit her own taste.

'But you *are* red-haired', said Lida stubbornly. 'There's a reddish tint. You remind me slightly of a friend of mine. . . .'

I saw no point in pursuing the subject, which was dangerous for all of us, but I did say in no uncertain words that I couldn't stand red-haired men.

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Red-haired people always think they're being watched, so they get terrific ideas into their heads and don't trust anybody. But in fact nobody at all watches them and nor would anybody want to. People couldn't care less about them.

'They're very jealous people, though', said Lida boastfully, 'and they have very sensitive feelings and a great understanding of everything'.

I saw the drift of her thoughts only too clearly, but it was all of no avail. By the time our meal was served, her red-haired Prince Charming had progressed even further in his devastating ingenuity. Lying in the darkness with his face pressed against a pillow, he was trying as hard as he could not to think about anything at all.

'Eeny meeny, miny mo. Eeny meeny, miny mo', he was muttering with great concentration.

He thought that if he disengaged his brain by means of obvious gibberish, he would rid himself of the snoopers who were spying on him from within. Not content with setting the whole outside world against himself, he had noted within himself the signs of my secret investigation and had decided to start a battle of minds with me. 'Eeny meeny, miny mo'—how could one get through a barrage like that? Not a hope of coming to grips with it. What did it mean, this dull and uninspired rigmarole? I said to Lida, pouring out the cognac:

'Drink, Lida. Drink, Liddikins. Let's not think about red-haired people. Don't bother your head about them and you'll feel much better. Eat your *satsivi* and *shashlyk*. *Shashlyk*! *Shashlyk*! *Satsivi*!'

'Eeny meeny miny mo, eeny meeny miny mo, eeny meeny miny mo . . .'

'*Satsivi*! *Satsivi*! Eat your *shashlyk*, Lida. Nice, red-haired *shashlyk*. *Shash*- or *shish*-? *lyk*! *Lyk*! *Lyk*! *Satsivi*!'

But however much we tried, we could not take our minds off each other and overcome the attraction which was leading us to disaster. Moreover neither he nor I got much help from Lida. Warming up after her third glass, she said:

'I like you, Hypolite. You remind me very, very much of someone I know. He also gave me nice things to eat at some friends of mine. Only please shave off your beard. Please, dear, for my sake! Get a razor and shave it off!' The suggestion took my breath away.

'Shut up!' I shouted at her. 'Not another word! Not a word about sharp instruments of any kind! Do you hear?' At the same moment I saw him raise his head. You raised your head, as though you were listening to our conversation, and smiled. You said to yourself: 'I must shave!' and repeated aloud: 'I must shave! Eeny meeny miny mo, I must shave!' And you smiled again, the second time in all these days.

I was shaking like a leaf. I seized Lida by the hand and we ran out into the street, without finishing our cognac. Here I told her, without any more ado, that I loved her madly, passionately, and didn't want to look at anybody or think about anybody but her and that therefore she must be mine straight away, right here on the spot. You got up and switched on the light. You screwed up your eyes. Lida said:

'But it's cold here and there are too many people around. If you must, let's go to your place, unless you're married'. I dragged her along the street while you heated the water and looked for your shaving-brush and razor. I had very little time left. There was nothing for it but to go up somebody's front stairs. It wouldn't be all that cold on the top landing and we were unlikely to be seen. And suppose we were seen? What did I care? I had my own troubles and it was up to me not to take notice of anybody! Before it was too late, I wanted to get out of this game, which might end badly, and I had no other means of escape except Lida. I went down on my knees before her. I remembered the rule that one's defences are more easily penetrated from below and that a man on his knees can grab you by the legs and throw you on your back.

So it in fact happened. Lida lovingly ruffled the hair on my bent head and I put my arms around her thin legs and pushed her against the wall. I didn't want to lay her on the tiles in case she caught a cold. I was not ashamed of my

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intentions, which were frank enough. After all, I wasn't doing all this for my own pleasure. I had no choice.

It would have been better if you had been in my place. The thing that you had always lacked most of all was frankness. Yet in the arms of a woman even the most secretive and arrogant of men are forced to behave naturally. Perhaps, if you had not got rid of Lida, this would have been some help to you and—who knows?—if you had been a little more trusting, perhaps you would have understood me a little better. . . .

But you had decided on a different course and now the razor was clutched between your freckled fingers and you were drawing it over your cheeks, as though you really did mean to tidy them up. Seeing through your feint, I was in a hurry. I must plunge at once into what I was doing, so that you would at last cease to notice me and give up the struggle together with all your furtive dreams of vengeance.

Lida was sighing deeply and stroking my hair with her eyes shut:

'Kolya, Kolenka! Nikolai Ivanovich! My darling little ginger-head! My angel!', she said over and over again. I was not jealous, but I was upset by this constant reminder of you, by this awkward proximity to you at a moment when I was hoping to hide well away from you. I was getting dangerously close to you and I could already see your eyes somewhere next to me. They were dilated with fury. Stop! Stop! It was too late. I entered into your brain, into your fevered mind, and your last secrets, which I had no desire to know, were laid bare before me. You jumped up from the table. All the witnesses of your crime were gathered together. Aha! Caught you! You lunged at me, at Lida and at the whole world, with your open razor.

'Stop! How dare you! What are you doing?' I closed my eyes. And at once I regained the calm I had not known for a long time. Everything was dark and quiet. I could no longer see you. You no longer existed. When I opened my eyes, Lida was putting rouge on her lips. She was straightening her coat and her dress. She had lost a button and it rolled down from step to step. She went and picked it up. Then she went down another floor.

'Where are you going, Lida?' I asked, out of politeness rather than from genuine curiosity. There was no answer. She was hurrying back to the beat she had left an hour before. Looking in that direction, I saw that she could have saved herself the trouble. There was nobody to waylay. Our friend was sprawled under the table with his face in lather and his throat cut. As he fell, he had managed to smash the table-lamp. The room was in darkness.

I sat down on a step until Lida had gone. But she could not completely evade my view. I then got up and, leaving the hospitable stairway, I set off on my usual round through the town.

Nothing had changed. It was snowing and the time of day was just as vague. The two engineers—his former colleagues Lobzikov and Polyansky—were playing Chopin. Four hundred women were still giving birth every minute. Vera Ivanovna was applying a compress to Graube's black-eye. An auburn-haired girl was putting on trousers. The brunette, bent over a basin, was preparing for her meeting with Nikolai Vasilyevich who, as had happened before, was running, slightly drunk, through the cold. The body of Nikolai Ivanovich was lying in the locked room. Lida paced up and down like a sentry under his window. I saw all this and could not get him out of my mind. I was rather sad. You have gone and I am left. I do not regret your death. I am sorry I can't forget you.

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PUBLISHING IN THE USSR

Policy Documents

The well-known advice to authors under Stalin was: 'Don't think. If you can't help thinking, don't write. If you must write, don't publish. If you publish, recant'.

Things have become much more complicated since then, but little is known about the actual mechanics of intellectual control, as it is exercised behind the scenes in the post-Stalin set-up. Some interesting glimpses are however provided in a recently published book, Questions of Ideological Work (*Moscow,* 1961). *As it is not easily available, we give below some translated excerpts.*

ON MEASURES FOR IMPROVING THE WORK OF THE ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES ATTACHED TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE CPSU. RESOLUTION OF THE CC OF THE CPSU, 3 SEPTEMBER 1954 (PP. 69–70).

The CC of the CPSU notes that the Academy of Social Sciences attached to the CC of the CPSU has carried out certain positive work in the training of qualified instructors for party schools and institutes of higher learning at the district, region, and republic level, as well as theoreticians for the CC of the Communist Parties of the Union Republics, regional committees and district committees of the CPSU.

At the same time the CC of the CPSU notes that important shortcomings exist in the work of the Academy of Social Sciences. The Academy unsatisfactorily fulfils the main task assigned to it, namely, to prepare highly educated Marxists who possess profound learning in the social sciences and who are capable of conducting active work on the ideological front. The theoretical training of many of the Academy's graduates is not up to the level required by the Party from ideological workers in present day conditions. Many graduates of the Academy have insufficient scholarly training, are unable to apply the marxist method creatively, fall into the errors of dogmatism and scholasticism, and are not equipped with the indispensable knowledge required to combat ideology hostile to Marxism-Leninism.

Instead of deep and diverse theoretical learning, the work of graduates at the Academy consists mainly in the preparation and defence of 'candidate-dissertations'. The defence of dissertations has almost become an end in itself. Only one year and a half of the three-year course is allotted to the theoretical training of graduates. Whilst preparing their candidate examinations, they do not study sufficiently the indispensable marxist literature, the numerous important works of the forerunners of Marxism, nor do they make themselves familiar with the writings of the ideological opponents of Marxism, in order to be able actively to unmask hostile bourgeois ideology. Graduates of the Academy have a poor command of foreign languages. Holders of chairs and

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teachers at the Academy lower the standards required from candidates and do not actually supervise their study of the necessary literature. The courses and seminars are often out of touch with the tasks and practices of communist construction. Little encouragement is given to prominent workers in science and culture, or to leading party and government officials to lecture and give reports before the Academy. Such a training system does not ensure the fulfilment by the Academy of its main task, which is to prepare theoreticians with the broad outlook indispensable to the Party.

At the departmental meetings there is no serious scientific criticism of the dissertations presented. The defence of dissertations is often carried out as a formality in a hurried and superficial discussion, without a sufficiently penetrating and critical analysis. The Academy has accepted many dissertations on unimportant, parochial, and outdated topics, lacking scientific formulation and conclusions. The scientific work of the professors at the Academy is inadequate and is unconnected with the activity of scientific institutions and institutes of higher learning. The occupants of chairs at the Academy do not take sufficient interest in the elaboration of theoretical problems connected with the ideological work of the Party. The Academic Council has failed to achieve a proper position in the scientific and educational field.

When selecting candidates for the Academy district, regional, and central committees of the communist parties of the union republics, the Academy of Social Sciences, and the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the CC of the CPSU depart from the rules governing admission. Persons lacking the knowledge and the aptitude required for theoretical work are often admitted. The local party organisations do not always take into account the fact that the Academy of Social Sciences of the CC of the CPSU is the highest link in the system of training theoretical workers for the party, and that only party members politically mature and scientifically capable should be recommended.

The work of the Rector's office of the Academy is unsatisfactory; the Rector, comrade *Nadtocheyev*, does not ensure the direction of the Academy's work.

MEASURES FOR IMPROVING THE WORK OF THE INSTITUTE OF MARXISM-LENINISM ATTACHED TO THE CC OF THE CPSU. RESOLUTION OF THE CC OF THE CPSU, 17 JUNE 1960 (PP. 173–74).

The Central Committee of the CPSU notes that in recent years the Institute of Marxism-Leninism and its local branches have carried out important work in collecting, scientifically arranging, and preparing for publication the literary legacies of the classics of Marxism-Leninism, the writings of outstanding men of the party and state, collections of important party documents, and short histories of local party organisations. The Institute is now working on a second complete edition of K. Marx and F. Engels and on a complete edition of the works of V. I. Lenin. It is about to conclude the writing of a history of the

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Civil War in the USSR, and is engaged on a history of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union. The Institute of Marxism-Leninism gives considerable aid to the fraternal communist parties in their preparatory work for the publication of editions of the classics of Marxism-Leninism.

At the same time, the CC of the CPSU notes that the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, having at its disposal ample documentary resources and the necessary staff of scientific workers, makes little use of existing possibilities to expand and enrich its scientific research activities. The Institute has not yet become a militant centre of scientific research for the elaboration of present-day problems of Marxist-Leninist theory. Having concentrated its attention mainly on scholarly editorial work, the Institute has almost entirely abandoned the preparation of the history of the CPSU and the elaboration of the main problems of Marxist-Leninist theory connected with the construction of communism in the USSR. The Institute does not struggle actively against the anti-marxist, reformist, and revisionist attacks made outside the Soviet Union; it publishes few works unmasking the bourgeois and social-democratic ideology of the right-wing socialist leaders and of contemporary revisionists.

Serious shortcomings also exist in the work of the Institute in the preparation of editions of the classics of Marxism-Leninism, the compilation of collections of party documents, and the writings of prominent men in the party and state. This work is conducted extremely slowly, with considerable lagging behind deadlines. The successive volumes of the complete edition of V. I. Lenin, of the works of K. Marx and F. Engels appear with considerable delay. The plans for publishing the proceedings and minutes of the Party Congresses and Conferences remain systematically unfulfilled.

Serious defects also exist in the quality of the literature published by the Institute. In certain collections of party documents and in the explanatory notes and glossaries factual mistakes and inaccuracies are to be found. The greater part of the collections published by the Institute concerns the pre-October period, while almost nothing is published on the Soviet period of the history of the CPSU. In the preparation of important jubilee collections of memoirs, carelessness is sometimes apparent in the selection of authors, and there is no proper supervision of similar collections published by local party organisations. The directors of the Institute do not pay proper attention to the problems of selecting and educating new staff, of reinforcing the existing scientific personnel and raising their professional qualifications. The staff of scholars are not assigned the tasks of elaborating the most important scientific problems; the books and pamphlets they prepare are not discussed. Certain members of the staff work without the necessary initiative and energy, and produce very little scientific work. These facts result from a lack of conscientiousness towards the execution of the tasks entrusted to them and from violations of labour discipline.

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The Institute has insufficient connections with local party organisations. It does not give its branches proper methodological help in the organisation of their scientific research work, there is little supervision of their activities; in a number of cases help for branches in improving the content of their work is replaced by a superficial check-up. This is one of the reasons why certain branches have published material on local party organisations which contained serious errors.

ON ELIMINATING SHORTCOMINGS IN THE PUBLICATION AND CRITICISM OF FOREIGN LITERATURE. EXTRACT FROM A RESOLUTION OF THE CC OF THE CPSU, 5 APRIL 1958 (PP. 247–49).

1. It is to be noted that for some years the publication of foreign literary works in our country has considerably expanded, which helps to develop our cultural ties with foreign countries and is of great importance to the intellectual life of the Soviet people.

However, the publication of foreign literature in the USSR suffers from serious deficiencies and grave errors, which harm the cause of the intellectual education of the workers.

The Ministry of Culture of the USSR and the publishing houses which it administers, as well as the publishing houses of other ministries, departments, and organisations, make serious mistakes in planning the publication of foreign literature; primarily pursuing commercial ends, they give insufficient consideration to the intellectual and artistic qualities of the works and often act irresponsibly in the choice of foreign books and the number of copies to be printed, putting on the market great numbers of books not only devoid of intellectual and artistic value, but sometimes because of their tendencies entirely unacceptable to the Soviet reader. During the years 1956–57 alone, one and a half-million copies of Conan Doyle's *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* were printed by the central and local publishing houses. At the same time a number of publishing houses issued mass editions of the novel *Queen Margot*, by A. Dumas. The publishing house of Foreign Literature (Inoizdat) made the mistake of printing a mass edition (90,000 copies) of the novel *The Iron King*, by Druon.

While this is going on, advanced modern literature, which gives a realistic description of the historical transformation in the socialist countries, of the liberation movements and the struggle of the peoples for peace and democracy, is published in obviously inadequate numbers. The central and local publishing houses do not always assist the reader to comprehend complex literary phenomena, by publishing books by authors from capitalist countries without critical introductions and commentaries. Thus, in publishing four novels by Upton Sinclair, the State Publishing House of Artistic Literature did not accompany a single one of them by introductory articles, although the ideological position adopted by Sinclair in recent years and certain features of the works themselves demand basic criticism.

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Criticism and reviews of foreign literature in the periodical press are unsatisfactory. The process of growth and the strengthening of progressive world literature are not revealed with sufficient clarity by the critics; their presentation of the creative work of advanced foreign writers is poor. At the same time, certain Soviet critics praise the work of bourgeois writers and fail to give a broad critical assessment of it, thus leading to an incorrect orientation of the reader.

2. It is considered that the main task of the publishing houses issuing foreign literature is to publish books contributing to the communist education of the workers, to their knowledge of the classics of world literature, to widening their cultural horizon and developing their artistic taste; to publish works which reflect the more important processes of social development, the growth of progressive democratic forces, the struggle of the peoples for peace and democracy. To this end a strict and exacting selection of works should be practised, based on their ideological and artistic merits.

3. The Ministry of Culture of the USSR and the directors of the publishing houses issuing foreign literature are instructed to revise the present practices of planning and of publishing works by foreign authors, to eliminate existing shortcomings and faults, to increase the number of editors of foreign literature, to adopt measures for strengthening the activity of the editorial councils of the publishing houses and for increasing their role in the planning of publication of literature.

4. In order to eliminate duplication in the publication of works by foreign authors, the Department for Propaganda and Agitation of the CC of the CPSU in the Union Republics and the Department of Culture of the CC of the CPSU are charged with the task of inspecting plans for the publication of foreign literature by the publishing houses.

5. It is recommended that the CC of the communist parties of the Union Republics, regional committees and district committees of the CPSU ensure the supervision of the publication by local publishing houses of books by foreign authors.

6. The editorial boards of the central, republic, and district newspapers, as well as those of the central and republic literary periodicals are instructed to organise the comprehensive reviewing of foreign literature issued by Soviet publishing houses. The basic task of this criticism and reviewing should be to give a thorough exposition of the ideological and artistic merits and deficiencies of books by foreign authors published in our country.

7. The editorial board of *Inostrannaya Literatura* is instructed to publish regular reviews of books by foreign authors published in the USSR and to ensure a high ideological level of the published material.

SERIOUS SHORTCOMINGS IN THE CONTENTS OF THE MAGAZINE *Ogonek*. RESOLUTION OF THE CC OF THE CPSU, 9 SEPTEMBER 1958 (PP. 259–60).

The CC of the CPSU notes that as a result of errors in the management of the magazine *Ogonek*, permitted by its chief editor comrade Sofronov,

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the contents of the magazine has in recent times suffered from serious shortcomings. The life of the peoples of the USSR, the important economic and cultural tasks put forward by the Communist Party and the Soviet government, are treated superficially and ineffectually. In particular, resolutions of the plenary sessions of the CC of the CPSU on questions of industry and agriculture, the labour of the Soviet people in putting these resolutions into operation, find no worthy reflection in this magazine; the lofty character of communist construction is not presented in a bright and attractive form. The magazine is of little assistance to the party in the education of the Soviet people and in mobilising them for the successful realisation of the tasks of communist construction.

At the same time, in one issue after another, the editorial board devotes far too much space to all kinds of travel stories and descriptions of journeys abroad by members of the staff, as well as to casual writings devoid of aesthetic or educational value, such as the detective story ' The Copper Button ' by L. Ovalov.

Serious shortcomings also exist in the artistic layout of the magazine. The editorial committee has lost its sense of proportion, publishing, quite unnecessarily, many dozens of photographs on foreign themes, and failing to show the necessary initiative and artistic taste in the choice of illustrations of Soviet life. Many photographs appearing on the back and front covers of the magazine are primitive, inexpressive in execution, and dealing with trivial matters.

In the pursuit of high fees, the irregular practice of publishing material mainly prepared by staff members has taken root in the magazine, as seen especially in its recent numbers. Prominent Soviet scholars and writers, industrial and agricultural workers, men active in the cultural sphere, are not encouraged to contribute to the magazine; authors from the Union Republics appear on its pages very rarely. The editorial board in its work and at its meetings does not usually submit material destined for publication to a penetrating critical analysis. It overlooks errors in the choice of authors, in the organisation of the editorial machinery, and in the activities of the editorial board.

The CC of the CPSU resolves:

1. To point out to the editor in chief of *Ogonek*, A. V. Sofronov, and to its editorial board the serious faults in the management of the magazine, as a result of which its ideological and artistic quality has in recent times notably declined.

To take note of the declaration made by comrade Sofronov that he will adopt all the necessary measures to eliminate the shortcomings and correct the faults mentioned in the present resolution, and to make a fundamental improvement in the form and content of the magazine.

2. To regard as the main task of *Ogonek* that it should give an all-round reflection of our country's internal life and of the more important international events. Material published in the magazine should be politically acute, up to date, and should portray in bright and attractive

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form the successes of the internal and external policy of the Communist Party, the varied life of the Soviet people, and the lofty character of communist construction.

3. To charge the editorial board to raise the ideological and artistic level of the magazine's appearance, to choose the illustrations more strictly, and to reject casual, insignificant, and pot-boiling photographs and drawings.

4. To charge the editorial board to end the irregular practice of publishing material prepared mainly by members of the staff, to widen the circle of authors, and to encourage contributions from industrial and agricultural workers, prominent scientists, writers, and cultural workers; to organise regular meetings with readers at factories, collective farms, state farms, and educational institutions.

THE MISAPPROPRIATION OF FUNDS BY THE EDITORIAL STAFF OF THE REPUBLIC NEWSPAPER *Kirgiziston Khakikati*. RESOLUTION OF THE CC OF THE CPSU, 16 SEPTEMBER 1958 (P. 261).

The CC of the CPSU notes that up to quite recently an intolerable and criminal misappropriation of funds assigned for the payment of fees has been perpetrated by the editorial staff of the republic newspaper *Kirgiziston Khakikati*. In the pursuit of high earnings, leading members of the editorial staff of this newspaper eliminated from its pages material supplied by outside writers, and illegally indented for and received fees even for the official material supplied by TASS and KIRTAG news agencies. During the year 1957, the leading workers on the editorial staff, comrades Guliamov, Khamidov, and Gafurov received in fees more than 75,000 rubles, representing 17% of the total sum paid in fees throughout the year.

The editor of the paper, comrade Guliamov, personally charged for and received fees amounting to about 45,000 rubles in the year 1957 and three months of 1958.

In his attempts to conceal these illegal 'earnings', comrade Guliamov resorted to outright forgery by paying out fees to individual staff members through substituted third persons. The technical employees of the editorial board alone, who never wrote a single line for the paper, received in this way about 18,000 rubles for the year 1957 and four months of the current year.

In its examination of the misappropriation committed by the editorial staff of the newspaper of the funds set aside for fees, the bureau of the CC of the CP of Kirgizia failed to give due weight to these facts, and imposed a wholly inadequate penalty, limited to a reprimand, on the principal offender, the editor of the paper Guliamov.

The CC of the CPSU decides:

1. To condemn the illegal and criminal misappropriation of the funds set aside for fees by the leading workers of the editorial staff of *Kirgiziston Khakikati* as incompatible with high Party responsibility and with the ethics of Soviet journalists.

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2. To instruct the CC of the Communist Party of Kirgizia to re-examine this affair.

SERIOUS SHORTCOMINGS AND ERRORS IN THE WORK OF THE DOSAAF PUBLISHING HOUSE. EXTRACT FROM A RESOLUTION OF THE CC OF THE CPSU, 9 OCTOBER 1958 (P. 262).

1. It is noted that there were serious shortcomings and errors in the work of the Dosaaf publishing house. Instead of devoting itself to the publication of books of a practical and instructive character, of help to the organisation of the Voluntary Society for Assisting the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy (Dosaaf), the publishing house took upon itself the less appropriate function of publishing mass editions of memoirs, of belles-lettres and adventure literature, and books of military history. Acting from commercial considerations, the publishing house undertook to issue a series of books under the heading 'The schoolboy's library'. In this series were published the anti-artistic and ideologically defective books of P. Golendukhin and P. Sharlapov, *Ts. 41. Notes of a Scout,* of B. Molchanov, *Disappeared without trace,* and of E. Goncharenko, *The aircraft has not returned.*

The CC of Dosaaf does not supervise the work of the publishing house, does not promptly expose the serious errors and shortcomings in its activities, and takes no steps to staff the publishing house with well-trained workers.

2. Cognisance is taken of the declaration of the chairman of the CC of Dosaaf, comrade Belov, that severe administrative penalties were imposed on those responsible for the publication of the ideologically defective and anti-artistic book *Ts. 41. Notes of a Scout,* and that the editor of the book, I. Trandafilova, has been dismissed.

3. Draws the attention of the deputy chairman of the CC of Dosaaf, comrade G. P. Shatunov and of the head of the Department of Propaganda of the CC of Dosaaf to their failure to inspect properly the ideological content of the books published, issued by the publishing house of Dosaaf.

4. Instructs the CC of Dosaaf:

(a) to examine thoroughly the work of the publishing house, to take steps for a fundamental improvement in its activities, and to strengthen it with qualified personnel.

(b) to reduce the administrative and managing staff by fifteen.

5. To recognise for the future that it is inappropriate for the Dosaaf publishing house to put out belles-lettres, adventure stories, and books on military history. The Dosaaf publishing house is required to make drastic improvements in the quality of its books and pamphlets on training, military affairs, and sport, necessary for the practical work of Dosaaf, as well as literature for propagating the fighting traditions of the Soviet armed forces, the heroic feats of Soviet fighters, and the accumulated experiences of the most advanced organisations of the Society.

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ON THE BOOK *New facts about Mayakovsky*. RESOLUTION OF THE CC OF THE CPSU, 31 MARCH 1959 (P. 270).

1. Notes that the Department of Language and Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR has committed a grave error by publishing 20,000 copies of the 65th volume of the 'Literary Heritage' series *New facts about Mayakovsky*.

The book contains material which distorts the figure of the famous Soviet poet, and correspondence of an intensely personal and intimate nature which is of no scientific interest. A number of other items, tendentiously inserted in the book, give an incorrect image of the poet, suggesting that he was in conflict with Soviet reality, and thus echoing the slanderous inventions of foreign revisionists. The reactionary foreign press is using *New facts about Mayakovsky* for anti-Soviet propaganda. The book has aroused the indignation of the Soviet public.

The direction of the Department of Language and Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (comrades Vinogradov and Khrapchenko) entrusted the preparation of the volume of 'Literary Heritage' consecrated to V. Mayakovsky to politically immature persons, incompetent to deal with questions of Soviet literature.

2. Draws the attention of the deputy secretary-academician of the Department of Language and Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, comrade M. B. Khrapchenko, to the irresponsible attitude he displayed with regard to the publication of *New facts about Mayakovsky*.

3. Charges the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR to adopt the necessary measures for improving its work in the field of literary studies, especially of the Soviet period, and to reinforce the editorial staff of 'Literary Heritage' with qualified workers.

4. Instructs the editorial board of the review *Kommunist* to publish an article on the state of literary studies with special attention to a criticism of the incorrect tendencies in the study of the works of V. Mayakovsky.

ON THE REVIEW *The Soviet Press*. EXTRACT FROM A RESOLUTION OF THE CC OF THE CPSU, 22 MAY 1959 (PP. 272–73).

The CC of the CPSU notes that the direction of the review *The Soviet Press*, which is the organ of the Union of Journalists of the USSR, is unsatisfactory. The main theme of the Soviet press, the theme of communist construction, is not treated in the pages of this review in a broad and penetrating manner in its application to questions of journalism. The review has not enough political awareness, contributes little to the raising of the ideological standards and professional skill of Soviet journalists, does not elaborate creative problems of Soviet journalism related to the task of training young personnel for the Soviet press. The review is too weak in generalising the positive experience

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of the work of newspapers and reviews accumulated in recent years, especially since the 20th Congress of the CPSU.

In connection with the preparation for the All-Union congress of journalists, the review attracted to its pages a great number of Soviet journalists, writers, and editors, but failed to put forward any consistent programme for the creative work of the Union. Instead of guiding the workers of the press towards the betterment of the contents of newspapers and reviews, towards a profound explanation of the resolutions and documents of the 21st Congress of the CPSU, instead of bringing forward for discussion topical problems concerned with raising the professional qualifications and literary skill of the workers of the press, the review published a series of immature and speculative articles and letters. Moreover, articles containing erroneous statements, which prove that certain journalists have incorrect ideas about the role of our press, have appeared in the latest number of the review. Thus, the article by A. Baulin 'On the great divide' (No. 3, 1959) contains dubious assertions about the position and role of the press in the life of Soviet society. In the article by A. Grebnev, 'Let us consider' (No. 1, 1959), clearly unrealistic proposals are brought forward for public discussion about increasing the size of certain newspapers and of founding new ones. These articles divert the workers of the reviews and newspapers from the fulfilment of the tasks confronting the Soviet press and in fact confuse them. Baulin's article was used by bourgeois press correspondents for an attack on the Soviet press and Soviet democracy.

All this proves that the editorial board of the review (editor in chief V. Podkurkov) does not manifest the steadfastness of principle and exacting attitude, peculiar to our party, in the selection of material destined for publication. The organisation bureau of the Union of Soviet Journalists fails to give enough attention to the affairs of the review or enough help to the editorial board in raising its ideological and professional standards.

ON THE WORK OF THE PUBLISHING HOUSE OF FOREIGN LITERATURE. EXTRACT FROM A RESOLUTION OF THE CC OF THE CPSU, 4 JUNE 1959 (PP. 274–75).

The CC of the CPSU notes that the Publishing House of Foreign Literature, founded in 1946, has accomplished considerable work in the translation and publication in the Russian language of foreign books, acquainting the Soviet reader with the achievements of science and technology, literature and art, and with the main philosophical, economic, and historical conceptions current in foreign countries. Since it began its work the publishing house has issued more than 46,000 books and symposia totalling more than 59 million copies.

At the same time the work of the Publishing House of Foreign Literature is handicapped by serious shortcomings. There are mistakes in the choice of foreign books destined for publication in the Russian language. There is only a small number of books by authors from

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the countries of the people's democracies, and from the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The publishing house acquaints its readers with life in the dependent and colonial countries by publishing literature originating not from those countries, but mainly from the United States, England, and France, and presenting a tendentious picture of the situation in the underdeveloped countries. Scientific authorities are not adequately consulted on the selection of literature. As a result of this, insignificant books, devoid of scientific or practical value are often published, and in a number of cases, even books which might cause harm to the politico-ideological education of the workers (Soper's *Elements of the art of speech,* Maugham's *Drawing conclusions* [At the End of the Day?], the symposium on *Military policy and national security,* and others).

A number of books by bourgeois authors on socio-economic themes and on military history have been published without profound and scientifically grounded introductory articles, which would give a critical analysis of the books and would reveal their merits and their faults (K. Tippelskirch, *History of the second world war,* D. Fuller, *The second world war,* T. Finletter, *Power and Policy,* F. Miksche, *Atomic weapons and armies,* D. Smith, *The military doctrine of the USA*).

The publishing house does not carefully follow developments in the international book market, does not have up-to-date information about book publication in foreign countries, there are excessive delays in ordering and obtaining foreign literature. The editorial committees of the publishing house do not apply sufficiently strict and high standards for up-to-date and competent translations and editing of literature. The process of examining and translating books and then preparing them for printing sometimes takes 2–3 years. Consequently some books are published in the USSR five years or more after their publication abroad, by which time they have often lost their practical value.

The shortcomings in the work of the publishing house are due, in large measure, to the fact that the director of the publishing house, comrade Chuvikov, his deputies, and the secretary of the party bureau of the publishing house, comrade Popov, are uncritical in their approach to the work of the publishing house, are not strict enough and fail to inculcate in their personnel a spirit of responsibility for the work entrusted to them. During the last few years some of the most highly qualified staff members have left the publishing house. The number of staff of the publishing house and their rates of pay, fixed in 1946, are at present below the accepted standard.

CONCERNING THE REVIEW *Problems of Philosophy*. EXTRACT FROM A RESOLUTION OF THE CC OF THE CPSU, 31 JULY 1959 (PP. 279–80).

The CC of the CPSU notes that the review of the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, *Problems of Philosophy,* has recently published a number of substantial articles dealing with questions of dialectical and historial materialism, philosophical

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problems of natural science and the history of philosophy, as well as articles criticising contemporary bourgeois philosophy, sociology, and revisionism. Authors from the union republics and the people's democracies now contribute more often to the review than formerly. The review has organised a series of useful debates, particularly on problems of the philosophy of science. The bibliographical and scientific information sections have been improved.

However, *Problems of Philosophy* has not yet taken the leading position in the scientific elaboration of questions of Marxist-Leninist philosophy, in the creative formulation and bold resolution of new theoretical problems raised by life, by work in the building of communism, and in studying the laws regulating the transition from socialism to communism. The review makes a feeble analysis of the processes taking place in the capitalist world, it gives an inadequate picture of the ideological struggle waged by the CPSU and the fraternal communist and workers parties against bourgeois ideology and manifestations of revisionism.

Although the editorial board of the review drew certain conclusions from the criticism of the errors connected with its publication of the noxious article by B. A. Nazarov and O. V. Gridneva 'About the backwardness of our drama and theatre', in its subsequent work it nevertheless showed leniency towards certain authors, as a result of which articles containing distortions and errors appeared in the pages of the review. Thus the article by A. D. Shershunov and A. V. Shcheglov 'On the peculiarities of the contradictions in the construction of socialism in the USSR' in fact distorts the true nature of the contradictions in our country and gives a false, one-sided representation of the essence of proletarian dictatorship. The article by P. P. Cherkashin 'On the social roots of religion' makes the incorrect deduction that the causes which sustain religious prejudices in the capitalist countries act equally in socialist society.

In its work, *Problems of Philosophy* is not always guided by the well-known injunction of V. I. Lenin 'that without a solid philosophical groundwork, the natural sciences and materialism cannot sustain the struggle against the pressure of bourgeois ideas and the restoration of a bourgeois view of the world'.

The material published in the review is of little help to scholars in their Marxist thinking and generalising about the achievements of contemporary natural science, in their mastering of materialist dialectics, in strengthening the union of the social and natural sciences, and in overcoming the incorrect attitude towards philosophy and other social sciences and the delight in formal logic which still persists in certain scientific circles. Lately the review has slackened in its struggle against idealistic trends in contemporary natural science, especially in physics and mathematics; the struggle between materialism and idealism in science is often replaced by an examination of narrowly specialised

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problems which have no direct bearing on the fundamental questions of the philosophy of the contemporary natural sciences.

The review very rarely publishes material for discussion and debate on problems of dialectical materialism, very few competent articles on questions of communist education and ethics. The unmasking of survivals of bourgeois private property morality and religious prejudice by the review is paltry. The section on aesthetics is very poor.

The editorial board of *Problems of Philosophy* does not work as a unified creative collectivity, determining the politico-ideological tone of the review, organising discussions on the main current problems of Marxist philosophy with the wide participation of the scientific world and guiding the work of the review's various departments. Certain members of the editorial board take no part whatever in the work of the review.

ON IMPROVING THE WORK OF THE REVIEW *Smena*. EXTRACT FROM A RESOLUTION OF THE CC OF THE CPSU, 6 JANUARY 1960 (PP. 293–95).

The CC of the CPSU notes that the review *Smena* has recently somewhat improved its work. It has become richer in content, its educational role has notably augmented, and readers have become more interested in it.

However, the review still has substantial shortcomings. It has no clearly defined character, it has little contact with its readers, it plays a very small part in encouraging them to discuss important questions concerning labour, leisure, and the cultural life of youth. The review is equally unsatisfactory in its treatment of matters of scientific and technological development, questions of the life of youth abroad, and of the mass movements of sport and physical culture. Works of leading writers, poets, and essayists appear rarely in the pages of *Smena,* the review is not sufficiently attractive to good artists. The make-up of the review is monotonous, and lacks artistic taste.

The CC of the CPSU decides:

To charge the editor in chief of *Smena,* comrade Nikonov, to eliminate the shortcomings noted in the work both of the editorial board and the editorial staff, to devise and carry out measures to improve the contents and the artistic appearance of the review.

To establish the review *Smena* as primarily for the working youth, to help the Party and the komsomol to educate youth in the spirit of communism, to shape the new man, educated and cultured, to take an active part in the work of society. To consider, as one of the main tasks of the review, the propagation of the historic resolutions of the 21st Congress of the CPSU. In order to achieve these ends the review is charged:

(a) to foster in young people the love of work, arouse in them the desire to live and work as communists, to broaden their outlook, to master knowledge and the new technology, and constantly to raise their educational and cultural level, taking as their example the brigades

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and shock workers of communist labour and the leaders and innovators of production.

(b) to inculcate in its readers a taste for political learning and for mastering Marxist-Leninist theory, to tell of the revolutionary traditions of the workers and the Communist Party and the heroic work of the komsomol, to educate the youth of both sexes in the spirit of Soviet patriotism and internationalism.

(c) to pay more attention to questions of the moral and ethical upbringing of youth, to inculcate in young people of both sexes the traits and qualities of the new communist man: love of labour, a high sense of responsibility towards society, collectivism, honesty, disinterestedness and self-denial, and an uncompromising attitude to the shortcomings and survivals of the past.

(d) to be an active transmitter of socialist culture to the mass of youth, to acquaint them with the achievements of art and literature, propagate a cultural way of life, show care for their recreation, conduct an implacable struggle against anti-social behaviour, give wider diffusion to problems of physical education of youth.

(e) to educate the young generation in a spirit of revolutionary vigilance, relentlessly fight any outgrowth of alien ideas and views, unmask the baseness and moral aridity of the ideology of individualism, lack of political awareness, and nihilism, actively take action against the servile adulation of the West.

(f) to search more courageously and creatively for such literary forms (feuilletons, readers' letters, competitions) as would satisfy the demands of youth and foster their interest in the review.

Charges the editorial board of *Smena* to adopt the necessary measures to raise the ideological, literary, and artistic standard of the drawings, articles, stories, and correspondence, and to give a brighter and more artistic aspect to the review.

Charges the Pravda publishing house to improve the quality of the printing of *Smena,* bringing it up to the level of *Ogonek,* and to assure its publication on the correct date.

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VIEWS AND REVIEWS

MARXISM AS HISTORY

Lewis S. Feuer

WITHIN the last few years, there has been a burst of remarkable creativity on the part of historians of socialism. The many-sided crisis in the socialist present has stimulated a searching into the socialist past. There is an effort to understand through historical analysis all that was involved in the greatest political movement of modern history. G. D. H. Cole wrote his encompassing *History of Socialist Thought* from the standpoint of an unflaggingly hopeful left socialist; Carl Landauer, with his heritage in German Social-Democracy, wrote an authoritative *European Socialism*, a qualified epitaph for an historical era. The new book by George Lichtheim, *Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study*,* adds a distinguished note of sociological analysis. Cole and Landauer will remain more useful for the actual narrative of ideas and actions; Lichtheim's volume is more the record of a philosophic intelligence probing into what he sees as the tragic defeat of Marxism.

The thesis of his study, says Lichtheim, is 'that Marxism is to be understood as a historical phenomenon, as against the now standard analysis of Marxian theory in terms of its compatibility with modern thought'. His approach is genetic in the sense that he wishes to emphasise the practical aims of Marxian ideas at different stages in their evolution. 'The naive view that doctrines are either true or false', he says, 'no other judgment being allowed, takes no account of the practical significance of theory'. Perhaps it would be philosophically wiser to avoid this sundering of practical bearing from truth and falsehood. For a theory which works in a given historical context may be false not because of what it says, but because it has omitted a background of relevant variables and historical initial conditions; its practical significance may be founded precisely on its grasp of the special historical law for its time. Lichtheim, however, is not concerned with such epistemological issues. Modern society, he says, has moved beyond the stage with whose analysis Marx was concerned. Marxism came into being as a coherent system during the dozen years between the death of Marx in 1883 and that of Engels. It was the orthodoxy of the socialist movement in Central Europe from 1890 to 1914 because of special historical factors. As a system, it has now disintegrated, its mystique having withered away as it took on 'the modest dimensions of an essay in economic planning'. Nevertheless, it still 'conserves its importance as a tool of analysis'. What is left of scientific socialism

* George Lichtheim, *Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London; Frederick Praeger, New York, 1961, 40s. net.

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is thus, according to Lichtheim, an academic contribution; Marxism, as the philosophy of a socialist movement, is gone.

I could not help feeling as I read this fine book that somehow the author has confined too narrowly the spatio-temporal co-ordinates of the practical significance of Marxism. I could not help but recall a small circle of Indo-Chinese coolies which used to meet during 1944 in the Pacific island of New Caledonia. Some of them were 'near-intellectuals', that is, they could read and write a little, and they gathered in the home of the only communist on the island because here alone they found encouragement. The coolies were kept at forced labour in the mines and smelters, and needed passes to walk in the evening. The Marxist movement gave them the words, images, metaphors, with which to express their own striving for dignity. They heard stories of the Communards who had been exiled to this island in 1871. No other system of political ideas achieves the identification with the indignation of the lower classes which Marxism does; so long as this consciousness of being exploited recurs in our time, one may expect to see its resurgence. Marxism survives its refutations because it has caught the vision which, at least in brief moments, sustains the political movement of the lowest class. And I fear that Lichtheim has not done justice to the primal psychological source of Marxism.

Thus, it was not 'the gradual maturation of industrial capitalism' which in diverse places and times, in England, France, and Germany, weakened the appeal of Marxism. Apart from the state of technological advance and organisation, the appeal of Marxism for the working class varied most directly with their sense of being exploited. Even today the hold which the Communist Party has on the French working class belies the view of Marxism as the response exclusively of the proletariat in an early stage of industrialisation. Many young English Labourites were drawn to Marxism in the thirties because of the impact of the depression, the shadow of Nazism, and the hope aroused by Soviet society. The 'maturation' of capitalism was not a benign agent for automatically solving social problems.

WITH an abundance of analytical detail and insight, Lichtheim traces the evolution of Marxism from its Hegelian swaddling-clothes to the formulation of the materialist conception of history. The latter, he says, would never have come into being but for the heritage of German idealism. One wonders whether this isn't attributing too much importance to Hegel. Lewis H. Morgan in America, Thierry and Guizot in France, Thorold Rogers in England, were in different ways approximating to historical materialism without benefit of Hegel. In America, the conservative Spencerian historian, John Fiske, made economic factors primary. Marx, writing editorials on wood theft for the *Rheinische Zeitung* in 1842, Engels studying the slums of Manchester in 1843, came to perceive economic realities which were absent from Hegelian texts.

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The actual genesis of historical materialism was from external realities, not from idealistic metaphysics.

Marx, as Lichtheim forcefully observes, was, except for one brief interlude, adamantly opposed to the secret society as a mode of organisation for the socialist movement. Leninism, according to Lichtheim, with its 'conspiratorial elite of "professional revolutionaries"', constituted a reversion to the Blanquist model. Bolshevism therefore, he says, was a 'profound "revision" of Marxist doctrine'. It seems to me, however, that Marx's standpoint was far more multi-potential than Lichtheim acknowledges. Like most great thinkers, Marx began with a general standpoint, a decision-base, which he shifted and modified in accordance with changing experiences. Those who say that Lenin represented simply a Blanquist reversion perhaps forget that it was Engels himself who said that Russia was the one country where the Blanquist tactic might well be justified. To Vera Zasulich he wrote in 1885 that Russia

> is one of the exceptional cases where it is possible for a handful of people to *make* a revolution, i.e., with one little push to cause a whole system, which (to use a metaphor of Plekhanov's) is in more than labile equilibrium, to come crashing down, and thus by an action in itself insignificant to release explosive forces that afterwards become uncontrollable. Well now, if ever Blanquism—the fantastic idea of overturning society by the action of a small conspiracy—had a certain justification for its existence, that is certainly in Petersburg.[1]

Lenin's departure from Marxism was not necessarily in his Russian Blanquism but in his unconditional imposition of this tactic on all countries, including the democratic ones as well.

Together with other noted scholars, Lichtheim holds that Engels made a travesty of Marx's ideas by making nature subject to the same laws as human history. There thus resulted a 'medley of philosophy and science' known as dialectical materialism; 'Marxism came to mean what Engels, in his writings between 1875 and 1895, said it meant, namely a materialist evolutionism'. Lichtheim acknowledges that the mature Marx laid 'a growing emphasis upon the scientific study of processes independent of human volition', but maintains that he never really merged the dialectic method, as Engels did, with evolutionism. Again, it seems to me that Lichtheim has understated the degree to which Marx's conception of his method altered during his lifetime. Marx included in his preface to the second edition of *Capital* a critic's characterisation of his method as analogous to the study of biological evolution. In describing the evolutionary method, said Marx, 'what else is he picturing but the dialectic method?' Marx's own evolution was always in this empiricist direction; it should not be forgotten that his last scientific undertaking was a survey-questionnaire in 1880 into the

[1] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Correspondence: 1846–1895* (New York, 1935), p. 437. When the trial of the assassins of Tsar Alexander II took place in 1881, Marx likewise wrote to his daughter Jenny that 'their modus operandi is a specifically Russian and historically inevitable method about which there is no more reason to moralise—for or against—than there is about the earthquake in Chios'. *Ibid.*, p. 391.

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conditions of French working-men. Such studies, he wrote, were now 'the first task which socialist democracy must perform in order to prepare the social renovation'. This was a far cry from the young Marx who had stormed at the working-man Weitling for his ignorance of Hegelian dialectic. Probably he had no strong conviction or interest in Engels' *Naturphilosophie,* for in that same preface he also agrees that economic laws, because they are evolutionary in form, differ from those of physics and chemistry. Nineteenth-century sociologists, however, Spencer, Engels, Nietzsche, liked to project their sociological laws on to all physical nature.

Karl Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein take their just place in this book as among those who contributed to the Marxist synthesis. In a striking passage Lichtheim depicts Kautsky as sharing with his fellow-Viennese Freud the same philosophy, morality, and even style. This last tribute will surprise those who have laboured with Kautsky's dull treatises. Bernstein is, I think, undervalued by Lichtheim as no theorist but only an 'erudite publicist'. Originality in political theory is often founded primarily on strength of character and honesty of perception, and these gifts Bernstein had in abundance. Lichtheim makes the penetrating observation that 'orthodoxy and radicalism had little to do with each other'. Bernstein, a revisionist, had the qualities of character to oppose the war of 1914 when most orthodox Marxists followed the Imperial government with discipline. The French socialists were far more revisionist than the German, but they were also led by a Jaurès, a man endowed with initiative, courage, and will. 'Behind the inflexibility of theoretical formulae', said Jaurès to Kautsky at Amsterdam in 1904, 'you conceal . . . your inability to act'.[2]

UNDERLYING the revisionist movement there was more than an economic-political criticism; there was the perception of the growing paralysis of will, the failure of human leadership, the rigidifying of energies in the socialist party. The neo-Kantian revisionists, as Lichtheim observes, were 'in particular hostile to every form of authoritarianism in politics and morals'. Kurt Eisner and Karl Liebknecht found in the Kantian philosophy the imperatives to the revolutionary will which were lacking in the Marxist non-ethic. The Kantians, not the Hegelians, Eisner actually said, would be the ones who, when crisis came, would act, and, if necessary, die for social justice.[3] He was not wrong in 1919.

The Fabians, in Lichtheim's judgment, were as authoritarian and bureaucratic as German socialism. But the Fabians never set out to control a mass organisation; they long refused to affiliate with any political party; there was no Fabian apparatus, and when the 'old gang' triumphed over H. G. Wells, it was not by virtue of control of a party

[2] James Joll, *The Second International 1889–1914* (London, 1955), p. 103.
[3] Max Beer, *Fifty Years of International Socialism* (London, 1937), pp. 198–199.

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machinery. Shaw, furthermore, always blended anarchist sentiments with a reverence for Webbian efficiency.

The history of Marxism from 1871 to 1918 has one basic lesson, according to Lichtheim: 'it is that a simple faith in the omnicompetence of "positive science" can itself become a philosophical illusion'. He speaks of the 'philosophical helplessness' of orthodox Marxism. It is not clear whether he means that the whole notion of scientific method in politics has been found wanting, or one particular scheme which professed to be for its time a virtually complete system. The belief that an omnicompetent science is possessed by human beings is not a scientific but a mythological one. Anti-scientism has been an emotional concomitant to the decline of Marxism in Western Europe, but it is not the lesson of history. Rather the warning is not to mistake myth for scientific knowledge, not to confuse guesses with certainties, and above all to remember that knowledge can be a guide to action only when there is, in the first place, the will to act.

Curiously, despite his attack on Marxism as scientism, Lichtheim describes Marx's *Capital* as essentially Kantian in spirit, as aiming at a critique of society, as its sub-title indicated, in the Kantian sense. 'Critique', however, in Marx's usage, seems to signify rather an analysis of underlying social disequilibria making for social change. Lichtheim tends to emphasise the traditional philosophical meaning of 'dialectic' in Marx, and says that 'Lenin's naively realistic theory of knowledge is incompatible with the dialectic'. This is hardly the case if the dialectic is regarded as a form of evolutionary laws.

Marxism, says Lichtheim, 'stands and falls with the claim that human action can bring about the end of "pre-history"'. A philosophy, however, is never confuted in this fashion by historical tests. What is likely to happen, it seems to me, is that a post-Marxian philosophy will arise which will bear to Marx the sort of relation in which Kant stood to such thinkers as Condorcet. The French *philosophes* enunciated a law of inevitable progress to which contemporary events were recalcitrant. Kant took their inevitable law, and transformed it into a postulate of progress to which we adhered so long as the possibility of its realisation remained.[4] Marx's theories of socialism and the working class may come to be regarded neither as myths nor predictions but as *directional postulates* of political philosophy, regulative principles which guide action and hope so long as the historical possibility exists of a democratic society and a liberal, non-authoritarian working class.

The materialist conception of history itself runs into difficulties which are perhaps more serious than they seem in Lichtheim's account. He notes that Marx, like most nineteenth-century writers, took the feudal system as having primarily a military origin and function.[5] He does not explain how Marx could reconcile, as he believes, this 'force' theory with

[4] *Kant's Principles of Politics*, ed. W. Hastie, Edinburgh, 1891, pp. 65–76.

[5] Engels, it might be added, developed this theory in his article, 'Army', for the *New American Cyclopaedia* (New York, 1858), pp. 123–140.

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historical materialism. Indeed, when Marx and Engels assert that both force and race are economic factors, they are using 'economic' in a sense so broad as to come near tautologising the concept.[6] The materialistic conception of history, moreover, evolved in Marx's analysis from its original status as a universal evolutionary law to a final form in which it dispensed with the universal pattern. The materialist conception of history as stated in 1859 in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,* involved the evolutionary pattern; 'no social order ever disappears before all the productive forces, for which there is room in it, have been developed'. Twenty-two years later, however, in 1881, he wrote to Vera Zasulich of his analysis in *Capital* that 'the "historical inevitability" of this movement is *expressly* limited to the *countries of Western Europe*'.[7]

LICHTHEIM'S chapters on Marxian economics present brilliantly within a brief compass a series of basic points of criticism and interpretation. He cogently criticises Rosa Luxemburg's theory that capitalism would break down as its imperialism exhausted the pre-capitalist environment. It is, of course, possible that the end of colonialism, by removing restrictions on capitalist development in backward areas, would help revive capitalist trade. On the other hand, Luxemburg's scheme was one possible model of social evolution, although not the necessary one, and this perhaps Lichtheim does not acknowledge. He regards the labour theory of value as a restatement of the materialist conception of history, though one wonders then how a marginal utilitarian such as Edwin Seligman was able to subscribe to the latter without the former. The post-1930 debate on socialist planning coincided, says Lichtheim, 'with the final dissolution of the Marxian school'. The actual empirical evidence of the time bore far more strongly, however, against such economists as Mises, who had predicted the collapse of the Soviet system and its retrogression to a household economy. Lichtheim maintains (I think correctly) that the labour theory of value is equivalent to the assertion that labour is the only factor of production, but he fears this comes close to being a tautology. A theory of exploitation, he argues, need not be based on the labour theory, but simply on the claims to unearned income that go with capitalist ownership. But, we may observe, the word 'unearned' would take us right back to the labour theory of value.

As Schumpeter pointed out, the labour theory of value would never work unless labour were the only factor of production. But this was precisely the significance of Marx's attack on the so-called trinitarian formula of land, labour, and capital. Labour was operationally the only human factor of production, for land and capital were non-human objects, not to be confused with landlords and capitalists, who were

[6] *Capital*, Vol. I, pp. 824, 562; *Correspondence*, p. 517.
[7] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Correspondence* (Moscow, 1953), p. 412.

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operationally superfluous in the productive process. We might argue from a post-Marxian standpoint that the analysis of economic concepts requires their reductive translation into labour terms. The actual operational definitions of 'effective demand' and 'available supply' would be founded on a labour-primacy. A high demand for a commodity would be equivalent to society's willingness to allocate a high proportion of its labour force in that direction. The scarcity of a good's supply would be equivalent to a high unit social labour-time necessary for its production. The intersection of a demand and supply curve would represent in social operational terms an equilibrium for the given commodity between the quantity of labour-time that society was prepared to expend and the quantity of labour-time required. Marx thought that industrial development was making obsolete the distinction between skilled and unskilled labour.[8] To the extent that there has been an increase in the proportion of semi-skilled labourers, and a decrease in the unskilled, his view has been partially validated.

Marx, in his last years, was studying Jevons' formulation of utility-value theory, and to this end had gone back to learning the differential calculus. No doubt he would have emphasised that for Jevons, too, capital was taken as congealed labour, or as Jevons put it with respect to consumer's capital, 'labour has been spent' on it. Engels did not deny that a socialist programme could be based, as the Fabians were doing, on the Jevonian economics. The latter, he said, was 'so vulgarised that one can make anything out of it, even socialism'.[9] Why then have Marxists been so attached to the labour theory of value? Probably because they recognised instinctively that it constituted the strongest basis for an ethical critique of capitalism, that the workers should not be deprived of their social product. True, Engels insisted that Marx 'never based his communist demands upon this, but upon the inevitable collapse of the capitalist mode of production'.[10] But when Engels himself wrote his articles for *The Labour Standard* in 1881, he left aside any reference to capitalist collapse, and argued straightforwardly that the working class should receive 'the whole of the produce of its own labour', and that the capitalist no longer had a valid claim to profits because he had ceased to perform any economic function. In other words, there was an unresolved discord in Marx and Engels between their historicist and ethical components. Even if their historicist law of the declining rate of profit fell apart, their moral enmity to capitalism would remain, and their socialist demand would be founded on their labour theory of value. In this sense, the latter was the core of their socialist standpoint, more central by far than the many-staged argument for the dialectical perishing of the capitalist order through the workings of its immanent economic

8 Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, p. 220.

9 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Letters to Americans: 1848–1895* (New York, 1953), p. 226.

10 Frederick Engels, 'Preface to the First German Edition', in Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, ed. C. P. Dutt and V. Chattopadhaya (New York), p. 11.

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law of development. The labour theory of value might be called, in the current idiom, a meta-economic theory; the ordinary categories of demand and supply are adequate for the purposes of accounting, but when questions are raised concerning 'sociological foundations', then we proceed to the meta-economic level. In a rational socialist community, as Marx indicated, there would be an equivalence between utilities and labour-times; 'a definite social plan' would maintain 'the proper proportion between the different kinds of work to be done and the various wants of the community'.[11] The definition of exploitation, however, finally requires recourse to the basic labour-language; for although every exploiter in any society might be said to be depriving the exploited of his effective demand, the analysis of demand would show that he was being deprived of the fruits of his labour ('surplus labour').

THE richness of Lichtheim's historical-critical analysis still leaves outstanding the question: how did Marx, a scholar living for many years in the exiled obscurity of the British Museum, become so much the commanding figure of the labour movement that Bebel and Liebknecht would hasten to London for his blessing, while Jules Guesde journeyed to Engels' house in 1880 for Marx's help in drafting the programme of the French Socialist Party? 'The best people in all the working-class movements throughout the world', wrote Engels, 'have full confidence in him. At *critical junctures* they turn to him for advice.' He spoke of 'Marx's peculiar influence'.[12] Somehow there was the recognition that here was an intellectual who had made a total identification in imagination, emotion, and intellect with the workers' standpoint, but there are aspects of this question which challenge the psychoanalytical sociologist.

Perhaps it is where such psychological factors are involved that Lichtheim's historical-critical method is not altogether adequate. Leninism, he observes, was not simply Populism with a Marxist infusion; its essence was in its organisational model—the party of conspiratorial professional revolutionaries, organised in a centralised, dictatorial fashion. But then the Bolsheviks had no monopoly in this organisational model; the Social-Revolutionaries, numerous and influential, gave an equal emphasis to the primary role of the revolutionary intellectual, and had a ramified illegal apparatus manned by professional conspirators such as Boris Savinkov.[13] The Bolshevik organisational model had little to do with their successful seizure of power in 1917. Much more important was the fact that they were not fixated in an oppositionist mentality; their break with the old order was more intense, and they really wanted

11 Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, pp. 90–91.

12 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 418.

13 'Like other radical organizations in Russia, it had never been a political party in the real sense but rather a secret society.' Cf. Oliver H. Radkey, *The Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism* (New York, 1958), pp. 9, 68–69, 128.

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power more than their rivals. Their utter rejection of the 'imperialist war', above all, made them the spokesmen of the people's mood. Lichtheim remarks that the split between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks corresponded little to that between orthodox Marxists and Revisionists, despite Lenin's insistence on their essential resemblance. In a formal sense, Lichtheim is right, but in the underlying psychological substratum there was a great similarity between the standpoints of Bernstein and the Menshevik leaders. Bernstein and Martov shared the same concern for the moral values of democracy.

Revisionism signified, says Lichtheim, 'some degree of accommodation to the *status quo*'; this emotional outlook they shared with the Mensheviks. Yet revisionism was not so mistaken as Lichtheim says in its basic judgment as to the possibility of non-revolutionary change. The success of the revisionist standpoint depended primarily on the avoidance of a European war; if the peace had been maintained, a gradual democratic socialist evolution might well have taken place. The outbreak of war gave Lenin his historical opportunity. The failure of the Second International was its failure to prevent the First World War.

The significance of socialist internationalism seems to me likewise insufficiently appreciated in Lichtheim's treatment of the Paris Commune and the International Working-men's Association. Under the influence of the Commune, writes Lichtheim, Marx reverted to utopianism, and 'imposed upon the growing Social-Democratic movement a political myth which stood in no relation to its daily practice'. The promise of socialist internationalism, however, was created in 1871 when the International spoke through Marx's words on behalf of the Commune; throughout Germany, mass meetings of working-men expressed their sympathy with the Paris proletariat, while Bebel told the Reichstag that 'the entire European proletariat, and all that have a feeling for freedom and independence in their heart, have their eyes fixed on Paris'. Bebel and Liebknecht were shortly thereafter imprisoned for 'treasonable intentions'. The Paris Commune was the occasion for the greatest manifestation of socialist internationalism which the world had seen, and thereby gave anxiety to European chancelleries. What the International meant psychologically to European working-men is perhaps still best grasped in such a novel as Emile Zola's *Germinal*, with its description of the coming of the International to the mining town of Montsou, bringing with it the promise of a 'new era of justice' and 'the blind self-dedication of a community of believers'.

Left out of Lichtheim's important book is the place of America in the Marxist saga. This omission may seem justified by the failure of Marxism in the United States, but America nonetheless had a deep significance for both Marxist theory and practice. It was the country of the first social-democratic movement in the world [14]; it was the most bourgeois and technological of nations, with no feudal hangovers, peopled

[14] Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (New York, 1939), p. 123. Karl Marx, *Selected Essays* (New York, 1926), p. 145.

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by successive waves of left-wing immigrants, but the country in which Marxism could take no root. Marx and Engels both bewailed the fact that after the Revolution of 1848, 'the most advanced sons of labour fled in despair to the Transatlantic Republic', and soon became Americanised, de-proletarianised. America was both an inspiration and confutation of Marxism. It provided Marx and Engels with their chief model of a country without a bureaucracy and standing army, and with local self-government highly developed, a country, in short, in which the state had largely withered away. But it always stood with a challenging 'exceptionalism' to Marx's analysis.

Time and again, Lichtheim refers to the role of intellectuals in the socialist movement, but there is no analysis of their differential receptivity to Marxism in different countries. He notes that in Germany social-democracy failed to make inroads on the educated middle class and the universities. There was no Lucien Herr as at the Ecole Normale to beckon young university students to socialism, nor did German students seek the socialist ethic as did the French. In Russia, on the other hand, as Lichtheim observes, the struggle between the Populists and Marxists was one of rival groups of intellectuals. Ernest Belfort Bax in 1889 wrote of the steady accession of the 'intellectual proletariat' to socialism, and ascribed it to their finding 'no opening for a livelihood in modern society'.[15] But there is a complex story here not yet understood—the cementing of the labour-intellectual alliance in some countries, its failure in others. For Marxism above all was the philosophy of the labour-intellectual alliance in societies where the sense of exploitation was deeply experienced. As Marxism declines in importance in the European context, it assumes, for this reason, a greater importance in Asia. For it still remains the social philosophy which provides the most natural idiom and vision for the exploited persons in all societies. For this reason, a book such as Lichtheim's may signalise not the end of a movement but the close of one of its periods.

THE CIVIL WAR

John Erickson

At a time when the Soviet ruling group is rearranging much of Soviet history in order to substitute one myth for another, a study of the grim but decisive progress of the Civil War, which finally nailed Bolshevism upon Russia, is singularly apt.* In this war of 'little valour and no mercy' the revolution fought to survive, but became as a consequence a much-modified thing. The need for military centralism affected the development of the Soviet state at a crucial juncture. Utopian socialism

15 Ernest Belfort Bax, *The Ethics of Socialism* (Fourth ed., London, 1902), p. xi.

* David Footman, *Civil War in Russia.* Faber and Faber. 1961. 328 pp. [Maps] 35s.

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collapsed under the blows of the blunt instrument of military necessity. Democracy, what there was of it, was rapidly done to death by both sides. This new work, let it be said at once, enjoys the great virtue of being free from any constricting 'interpretation'; an examination of the source materials, and the comments on sources as a whole, indicates a wide, unusual, and illuminating approach to what has frequently been passed over with unsatisfactory, repetitive, or unexplored generalisation. Nor is it merely a military catalogue, the value of which would be in any case questionable. The senior ex-Imperial Army officers who took service with the Red Army were themselves far from convinced of the value of the 'military lessons' of the war. Trotsky saw its limitations. In the welter of 'communist conceit' over the innovations of the Red command, Major-General Svechin stood aside to emphasise the dominant role which improvisation played in shaping the operational history of the Civil War. Nevertheless, Mr Footman's chapter on the creation of the Red Army—one of the prime movers—gives a vivid and comprehensive analysis of how the requirements of the field brought political disillusionment, friction, and sharp conflicts into the Bolshevik camp. As for the Bolsheviks and the war at large, the author clearly demonstrates how effective, in a struggle blotched with self-defeating incompetence on both sides, was Bolshevik political consciousness directed by a capable leadership. The point is very well made in the comparison of the combatants; both abandoned notions of 'democracy' and weak political allies at a relatively early stage, both became vastly dependent on peasant manpower, both military commands enjoyed approximately the same level of professional ability. The advantage of Red interior lines was offset by White stocks of war-materials. In the military context, however, the Russian officer played a special role, as the indispensable 'military specialist' dragooned into assisting the lame Red Army over the stiles of military know-how, and also as the fanatical combatant in the White officer-battalions. If the White armies had too many officers, itself a weakening factor, the Red Army had always too few.

Not only the consolidation of the Bolshevised Left but the final crash of the Right engages the author's full attention. This is taken very far beyond the superficiality of the broad arrows of advance which streak Soviet maps or the apologias which stream behind the White command. The enormity of personal and national tragedy is most skilfully combined in the study of the rise and fall of Kolchak, together with the ruination of the only All-Russian anti-Bolshevik authority ever to exist. The chronic confusion of the south is portrayed in the struggle of the Volunteer Army to establish itself in the midst of wavering Cossack communities. The futile incursion which was Intervention is examined and assessed in the melancholy tale of the British undertaking in North Russia. That this is no mere episodic treatment of the war, nor one clamped arbitrarily into the limited Red-White political spectrum, is amply borne out by the chronicle devoted to the multi-coloured Makhno. Mr Footman has throughout demonstrated that much of the romanticised

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partisan activity exercised little effective and directive influence on military operations, if only for the obvious reason that the partisans could scarcely be controlled. The rise to power of Makhno, expert guerrilla, is quite another matter and deserves this wider treatment. The complex, tense, and blood-stained episodes were here shaped on an inverted political front, on which both Red and White alike were forced to fight at different times. The political and military ramifications of the *Makhnovshchina* throw a revealing and important light on the Russian peasantry in the war, other than their being merely the cannon-fodder of battle-field convulsions. As a probe into the evolution of peasant attitudes, this section, even as one bringing a relatively unfamiliar story into sharper focus, is worth closer attention.

The geographically disparate, ragged, and disease-ridden battle-fronts ranging over all Russia have been knitted up most successfully in these studies of vital issues and vital personalities. The brutalities brought no triumphs. The decisive manoeuvre was political, wherein Lenin and Trotsky far outmatched Kolchak and Denikin. Its reconstruction has been accomplished here with a marked caution in handling dubious or contradictory materials, a keen eye for the decisive if wayward circumstance, and a sympathetic hand in setting down human tragedies and a national catastrophe. The political myths have been melted down by objectivity and a real circumspection in the admirable separation of fact from contrived fiction.

RELIGION IN RUSSIA

Geoffrey Wheeler

Mr Kolarz describes his latest book * as an attempt to provide 'a geography of the human soul in the Soviet State', and the result is as complete as painstaking research, penetrating analysis, and a reasonable and sympathetic attitude could make it. No one familiar with Mr Kolarz's other books would expect his attitude towards the handling of the religious problem by the Soviet regime and the Communist party to be other than hostile, but he here lays more emphasis on the stupidity and clumsiness of the anti-religious campaign than on its innate evil.

The book consists of an introductory chapter on the survival of religion followed by a description of the fate not only of the main religious communities, but also of the smaller sects and religious groups of whose continued existence very little is generally known. A concluding chapter deals with the future of religion in Russia.

The history of the League of the Godless and of its successor, the Society for the Dissemination of Scientific and Political Knowledge, as

* Walter Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union*. Macmillan, London and New York. 518 pp. 50s.

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traced by Mr Kolarz, is a shameful record not only of cynical intolerance but also at times of barely credible obtuseness. The authorities appeared, and to a large extent still appear, to believe that the undoubted strength of religion can be broken and an end put to 'the religious era in the history of mankind' by a steady campaign of persecution, ridicule, and vilification without first providing a sufficiently solid moral and emotional alternative. In Mr Kolarz's view no communist regime could ever be genuinely popular unless it rids itself of the idea that a new society 'must necessarily be built without God'. He seems to cherish some hope that eventually communism may be impelled to seek a compromise with religion which is not just a formal and grudging recognition of religious hierarchies, beliefs, and practices, but a real admission of its compatibility with and necessity for the kind of Utopia which communism aims at creating.

The descriptions of the various religious communities of Russia with accounts of how they are faring under communism are well documented and of great interest. The least successful is the long chapter relating to Islam. From this there are some strange omissions: there is no reference to the Usul-i-jadid or New Method reformist movement (not to be confused with the 'Novomechetniki'), which was at first favoured and later liquidated by the Soviet authorities, or to Sultan Galiyev and his ill-fated plan for an Asian Comintern and a new form of communism specially designed to suit Muslim Asia. There are several indications that Mr Kolarz's knowledge of the doctrine, theology, and practice of Islam is less extensive than in respect of other religions. It is a pity, therefore, that the persons whose names are mentioned in the preface as having provided information on different aspects of the religious situation in the Soviet Union could not include a Muslim or an authority on Islam. A minor but regrettable defect of this chapter is the inconsistent transliteration of Arabic names.

The interest of this important work extends far beyond the study of Russian and Soviet affairs: it is an invaluable contribution to the long history of intolerance and to the study of the more recent phenomenon of materialism openly at war with spirituality.

THE JOURNALIST'S GUIDE

A. R.

So long as it sticks to the facts and figures of Soviet journalism this book is a useful source of information.* The reader can, by dint of some delving, put his hand on such items as, for example, the circulation of the central newspapers, the number of TV sets in the Soviet Union,

* N. Bogdanov and B. Vyazemsky, *Sputnik Zhurnalista.* (The Journalist's Reference Book.) Leningrad. 1961.

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the size of the worker and peasant correspondents' movement, the amount of new printing works scheduled to come into operation over the next few years, and the structure of Soviet publishing houses. It is also handy to have some idea of the working of Tass and of that hallowed institution, the editorial board. The odd nugget of new information occasionally comes to light (e.g. that Soviet publishing houses now seek the advice of the book trade before deciding the size of an edition). Almost half the book is of specialist interest only, being devoted to the technicalities of printing, lay-out, illustration and the like.

The picture of Soviet journalism conveyed by the book does, however, have several gaps, half-truths, and plain distortions. There is nowhere any reference to censorship as such, only a rather pompous section on 'Methods of Party Control', sprinkled with such phrases as 'Party discussion of each newspaper's plan of work' and 'the Party's day-by-day assistance to the editorial boards'. The powerful Department of Agitation and Propaganda of the Central Committee (Agitprop) makes no appearance in these pages, though there is a passing mention of Agitprop activity at the lower party levels (Republican and oblast). The Western reader (and perhaps the Soviet reader too) has also to swallow hard over such statements as 'the editor directs the political line of the newspaper' (p. 204).

There are one or two echoes of the Stalinist era. The notorious Zhdanov decrees of 1946–48 are referred to with approval. There is also a curious throw-back to the campaign for claiming Soviet priority in various scientific discoveries. The invention of radio by Popov is firmly reiterated; Marconi's name is not even mentioned. As regards television, the reader is left with the impression that Russia led the way, beginning with the researches of Professor Rozing of Petersburg University in 1910. This might of course be a case of misplaced local pride, since no less an authority than the *Large Soviet Encyclopedia* gives due recognition to Baird in England and Jenkins in the USA for their pioneer telecasts in 1925. Here these scientists are passed over in silence.

Where the book pauses to consider either the pre-revolutionary Russian press or the press, radio, and television of Western countries, it finds nothing to praise. Lack of contact with the masses, the waning confidence of the man-in-the-street in his newspapers, and the financial enslavement of the press by the capitalist monopolies are all trotted out in the depressingly familiar pattern. A special tear is shed for the demise of the *News Chronicle* and the *Star*, held to be symptomatic of the general decline of Western journalism. Amidst all this emphasis on gloom and corruption, however, the authors make one slip. During an attack on the 'Voice of America' for its campaign of 'lies and slander' against the Soviet bloc (p. 145), they admit that this station does put out 'more or less truthful' news items. From such glimpses of reality, great things may grow.

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There is a glossary at the end of the book containing information on printing terms, as well as on the Soviet and foreign press. Understandably, communist newspapers from various countries receive an honoured place. But what can be said of a survey which includes such non-communist newspapers as the *Melbourne Herald* and *El Diario* (La Paz) but omits all mention of the (Manchester) *Guardian*?

Finally, all those who have occasion to plough through *Pravda's* turgid columns will be thankful for the section on style, with its insistence on clarity and simplicity. Newspapers from Leningrad to Vladivostok please copy.

PASTERNAK

George Katkov

Mr Conquest has borrowed the title of his book * from a remarkable article by Edmund Wilson on Pasternak. His account of the tragic political developments which marked the last years of Pasternak's quiet and retired life is itself a sign of some courage. Coming at a time when the 'Pasternak case' has ceased to be headline news and when the deeper study of the literary and philosophical significance of Pasternak's writings has scarcely begun, the book might, at first sight, appear to be a reminder of events which have lost their topical character, without acquiring the significance of a link in the historical development of our days. The author has avoided the danger of such a reproach because his interest in the 'Pasternak Affair' clearly stems from his concern for Pasternak's poetical work. The story which he has to tell is not that of a public figure fighting for the right to broadcast heterodox opinions; it is that of a poet defending the purity of his poetic vision of the days in which he was fated to live in order to convey it to his fellow men. And it is his analysis of Pasternak's poetic and literary intentions, aptly supported by quotations from the poet's correspondence, which is the most moving and stimulating part of the book. On the darker side of the story the author has a clear understanding of the 'power of malice and evil', of its institutional structure in the Soviet Union, and of its persistent and vigilant pressure to prevent any unwelcome manifestation of individual courage and goodwill.

One would wish, however, for a deeper scrutiny of the background to the drama and for a better comprehension of certain aspects of Russian life. Some of these are not without importance for the understanding of, for instance, the importance of Pasternak's Jewish origins for his life and work. According to the author, they meant nothing to

* Robert Conquest, *Courage of Genius: The Pasternak Affair*, Collins and Harvill Press. London, 1961. 18s. net.

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Pasternak. He was ' a Russian steeped from childhood in the traditions and moods of his country '. One can hardly agree with this. The pages devoted to an analysis of Zhivago's friend Misha Gordon are clear evidence of how important the position of the assimilated intellectual Jew was in Pasternak's mind. But there is perhaps more to it than Pasternak's own analysis of this ' accursed question ' of Russian pre- and post-revolutionary conditions. Was not the age-long training in the maintenance of one's traditional faith in hostile and aggressive surroundings the best training for the lone individualist bent on preserving his integrity in an age which, as Pasternak says in one of his later poems, has been ' touched by rot ' ?

Having put his case for Pasternak ably and movingly, Mr Conquest devotes one-third of his book to the publication of Soviet material on the Pasternak affair, which reflects all stages of the persecution of the poet and his friends, and purports to be a justification for it. One could not be fairer to one's opponent's views, especially when one holds one's own as strongly as the author does. In themselves these appendices—of which there are nine, including Pasternak's own letter to *Pravda* of 5 November 1958—make repellent reading. The most remarkable one is the condemnation of *Dr Zhivago*, first published on 25 October 1958, but said to have been written in September 1956. This is probably a unique document of intellectual brainwashing. The technique of the author of this ingenious invective, who hides his anonymity behind the respectable figures made to sign it, was to demonstrate the weakness of character of Pasternak's hero, Zhivago, which led him at certain moments to ' a triple or even quadruple betrayal ', and then to transfer the suspicion of this treacherous trend in Zhivago's character to his creator. All this is obviously intended to induce a general feeling of guilt and inadequacy and so to make the poet more accessible to the ' advice ' offered by his colleagues of the Union of Writers, all of whom had—at least outwardly—accepted the principle of Party guidance of the literary conscience. Pasternak never answered this letter; in fact, the threats implicit in it, as well as the more open ones of the then Communist Youth leader and present head of the Security Police, Semichastny, never materialised while Pasternak was alive.

Mr Conquest makes it abundantly clear, however, that the ' organs of coercion ' in the USSR knew very well that the only threat which could have touched the poet was that of the persecution of the people he loved. This had been tried during the later stage of Stalin's reign of terror, when his friend Olga Ivinskaya was arrested and sent to a concentration camp. Her release and reinstatement in her former position happened in 1953 and was one of the reasons for the explosive development of the poet's creative powers in the last years of his life. Mr Conquest's book closes with an account of the stupid and cruel vengeance which the authorities took on this woman and her daughter

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after Pasternak's death. Not satisfied with a sentence for alleged infringement of currency regulations, Pasternak's detractors vilified her character and denounced her friendship with the poet as hypocritical and venal. They apparently failed to note the prophetic words of the poet, who took leave in one of his poems of the woman he loved as of one who had 'challenged the abyss of humiliation'. Tragic as her fate may be, she met the challenge with the courage of love.

HERZEN AND RUSSIAN SOCIALISM

Boris Elkin

This elaborate biography of Herzen * goes down to the end of the reign of Nicholas I and the beginning of the period of the Great Reforms in Russia.

Professor Malia has very diligently sorted and set out the vast available material. His presentation of the facts is sound, but some of his interpretations are unsatisfactory.

He sees the clue to Herzen's personality in 'frustration' which, he thinks, was caused by the impossibility for an intellectual in an absolutist country to fulfil his desire to realise fully his potentialities. It would be difficult to find an interpretation of Herzen's brilliant personality which would be further from the truth. However, the author persists in his theory and he even applies it to the whole of the Russian intelligentsia, without making it any more convincing.

Another defect is a certain lack of historical perspective. In many of his comments on the development of Herzen's ideas, Mr Malia writes from our present standard of knowledge, while Herzen belonged to the Europe of a hundred years ago. Herzen's attacks on centralism in France and his preference for the autonomy then enjoyed by some Italian municipalities lead Mr Malia to charge Herzen with anarchism, although in the middle of the nineteenth century the dividing line between socialism and anarchism had not yet been drawn, and centralism was at that time considered by no less a thinker than Tocqueville as one of the main evils undermining France. There is a critical account of Herzen's faith in the Russian peasant commune, which Herzen believed had its origin in primitive communism and might in the future form a bridge to modern socialism; but the author fails to note that in the middle of the last century the origin of the Russian commune had not been properly investigated and that no one could then predict its subsequent decay. He also accuses Herzen of Russian nationalism; but it was a strange nationalism, which did not prevent Herzen from asserting at the time

* Martin Malia, *Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism, 1812–1855*, Harvard/Oxford. 1961. 486 pp. 55s.

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of the Crimean war that Turkey was the victim of Russian aggression and from appealing to the Russian soldiers not to fire on the enemy.

This image of Herzen as an anarchist fed by nationalism seems to have struck even the author himself with surprise. For if it is true, how did it come about that in the period beginning just in 1855, when upon the accession of Alexander II the Russian political atmosphere changed radically, Herzen displayed moderate political realism and exerted a great influence upon the most important of reforms, the liberation of the peasants? Mr Malia admits that Herzen's revolutionary phraseology went beyond his real intentions; that after 1848, when Herzen's hopes of an early socialist revolution were disappointed, he gradually came to rely on evolutionary development; that Herzen's belief in the Russian peasant commune gave place to the view that it could become socialist only if it received the support of Western socialism. Thus, Mr Malia concludes, Herzen ' could be plausibly claimed as a precursor by Russian liberals no less than by socialists, since he has always made the dignity and freedom of the individual, or the problem of civil rights, the inspiration of his politics ' (p. 424). These admissions hardly agree with ' frustration ' as the clue to Herzen's personality.

But for all its weaknesses, and despite a certain cumbrousness in marked contrast to the sparkling brilliance of Herzen's writings, this book has considerable merits. It surveys a large part of Herzen's writings and letters up to the year 1855, which are little known and inaccessible to those unfamiliar with the Russian language, and it also acquaints the reader with Herzen's friends and environment. Along with the French study by Raoul Labry published in the nineteen-twenties, it will hold the attention of the reader interested in Herzen and in Russian intellectual history generally.

VARGA WRITES AGAIN

Alec Nove

The author of this little book * celebrated his eightieth birthday some years ago. He has a long life to look back upon, and he has to his credit a very solid contribution to communist economics. Not least of his titles to honour is his brush with Stalinist officialdom in 1947, when the dictator took exception to Varga's views concerning the changes which the war had wrought to the economy of the leading ' capitalist ' countries. Though not actually arrested, Varga was severely handled in print, and his Institute of World Economics liquidated—or rather its separate existence was ended. When the Institute was revived after Stalin's death,

* E. Varga, *Kapitalizm dvadtsatovo veka* (Twentieth-century capitalism). Moscow 1961. 148 pp.

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Varga was too old to be its director, but he remains to this day on the editorial board of its official organ. When, therefore, he puts pen to paper, it must be because he has something to say. He can be under no compulsion to produce hack-work, and, if it were necessary to repeat the usual formulas, he could obviously ask others to do it. Thus, it is worth seeking in this work, devoted to analysing 'the principal changes which capitalism has undergone in the sixty years of the twentieth century', the new ideas which the author wishes to convey.

He makes some statements of unimpeachable orthodoxy. Right at the start, he asserts that, 'whatever the differences between capitalism of our own day and the capitalism of the beginning of the twentieth century, it remains in essence the same capitalism with all its basic contradictions.' But having thus covered himself, he then devotes the bulk of the book to emphasising the differences, and directly or indirectly challenging some myths about the West. Of course, he does this in his capacity of an old and loyal servant of the Party; he would doubtless argue that there is much to be said for the view that Party policy ought to be based on an understanding of reality, and surely he would be right.

Varga devotes many pages to demonstrating the vast increase in output and the technical progress achieved in capitalist countries since the turn of the century. He notes the changing role of governments, the restrictions on laissez-faire and on movement of capital and men. He repeats some familiar formulas about the general crisis of capitalism, but also emphasises the rapidity of post-world-war-II recovery and subsequent growth of the economies of the principal capitalist countries. The remarkable industrial output tempos of West Germany, Japan, and France are properly documented and discussed. In fact, Varga's use of statistics is refreshingly free, most of the time, from slanted selectiveness. He does not dodge inconvenient facts. Thus he not only mentions the problem of American agricultural surpluses, but also gives figures to show the very large increase in yields per acre, figures which must surely give food for thought to his Russian readers. He also mentions the low unemployment rates of West European countries. He does not avoid the issue posed by the rise in the prosperity of Western colonialist countries after the loss of their colonies, which appears to contradict the familiar slogans about the importance of colonial exploitation. 'Take Holland for instance, the country with the greatest number of colonial slaves in proportion to her own population'; yet, he writes, between 1953 and 1959 Holland increased her industrial production by 42 per cent, doubled her house-building, and so on, despite the loss of Indonesia.

But the most important contribution of this book, and probably its raison d'être, is in the chapter dealing with the vulgar-Marxist myth of the impoverishment of the masses. True, he dresses up his argument in some orthodox clothes. Thus on p. 108 he declares that social services are in the interest of the monopolists, because education

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provides them with technical staffs and 'medical services are called upon to protect workers' health so that they may be exploited'. The monopoly-capitalists can and do make concessions to the workers to avoid trouble, to fight communist influences, without sacrificing profits, because technical progress made possible a very large rise in labour productivity, and so on. But he does face facts, facts about the big rise in the white-collar staffs and its political consequences, about the true extent of social services in England and elsewhere, about the rise in real wages and reduction in hours. 'The strength of the bourgeois parties and the absence of a mass communist party in England would be inexplicable if a part of the working class—more extensive than the old labour aristocracy—was not in a material position in which it considered it possible to go on living in capitalism, without a revolution; these things would be impossible if there took place (as is still sometimes asserted among us) a constant general impoverishment of the working class.' It seems likely that this emphasis on the realities of life in the West, the desire to get the truth across to the readers of political literature, constitutes the main reason for writing the book, which is aimed at the general reader (it was published by *Gospolitizdat*, i.e. the political publishing house, in 50,000 copies).

Varga, is, of course, guilty of quite a few propagandist exaggerations and some odd mis-statements. Thus on p. 140 he trots out the old fable about American education receiving less than 1 per cent of the U.S. budgetary revenues (ignoring, as usual, the expenditure of the separate states), and he also asserts on the same page that only the rich can send their children to universities in America. There is also a remarkable statement (p. 97) to the effect that 'in capitalist countries it is illegal for anyone except the state to lend money at low interest to underdeveloped countries'. Illegal? Imagination boggles at a capitalist trying to lend money to India at 2½ per cent and being prevented from doing so by the police! Indeed, the chapter on underdeveloped countries, though by no means devoid of good sense on occasion, does include some rather lurid paragraphs. But let us remember that this is a paperback, that Varga himself has written weightier stuff in the past few years, and that in many instances he shows his realism and his willingness to face many 'awkward' facts. In Soviet economics there are a number of very old men, working far beyond the age at which our professors would be compulsorily retired, who still contribute more original thought than do most of their colleagues of the following generation, who had their thought-processes stifled under Stalin. Books like Varga's could help to encourage the younger economists to think, as indeed a number of them show every sign of doing. So much the better.

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THE SOVIET ECONOMY

A. Zauberman

'There was a time', Alec Nove says in one of the opening pages, 'when any Soviet writer who discussed the West without "militant" epithets was denounced for "objectivism". Their understanding of the West suffered, and to a great extent still suffers, in consequence. It is to be hoped that the reader will feel that the author is guilty of the sin of "objectivism" which indeed it is his aim to commit' (p. 24). He should indeed be congratulated on having committed it very thoroughly. His book * is addressed both to the novice and the specialist, and succeeds admirably in meeting the needs of both without falling between the two stools; this is due in part to the excellent way he organises his subject matter.

Of the wide range of topics treated, a reviewer can select only one or two, in this case the author's general appraisal of the Soviet 'system' (by 'system' he means broadly the institutional set-up and mechanism).

It is Mr Nove's view that by now the 'system tends to outgrow itself' (p. 150); that indeed it does so to the extent that it has succeeded in establishing a modern industrial economy. The arguments in support of his thesis are, first, that the ever growing complexity of the economy makes the system unwieldy and obsolescent. The web of technological and economic interdependencies is rapidly expanding, and this in itself tends to overburden the planning and controlling centre, which now has to deal with a 'multiplication of priorities'. The Soviet planner has been working for decades with a few and well-defined ones: a large area of economic life was considered non-priority; to that extent needs were treated as a *residuum*. This was of course true of the production of industrial consumer goods, of food and housing. The status of these ex-cinderella sectors is now rising, and this too adds to the planners' burden. These two factors not only complicate both choices and planning procedures, but make it increasingly difficult to keep up with the pace of economic life. Another element is the end of the era of revolutionary upheavals, an era which justified the subordination of specifically economic rationality to extra-economic objectives. These points bear out Nove's thesis even without the support of further arguments, some of which may call for qualification. (To mention one—that the period of abundance of labour is drawing to an end: the phenomenon is patently only a relative one in a country where half the population is rural and two-fifths of the manpower is engaged in producing basic food, at extremely low levels of productivity.)

The obsolescence of the system generates the quest for a remedy; it is favoured by the change of intellectual climate in the country as shown

* Alec Nove, *The Soviet Economy—An Introduction*. Allen & Unwin, London. 1961. 25s.

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in the revival in Soviet economic thought: after prolonged stagnation it has come back to life and its theoretical battles largely reflect the growing sense of urgency.

Mr Nove gives a good deal of space to the reform movement in Soviet theory and practice. In an incisive analysis of changes carried out so far he shows that as often as not piecemeal reforms have proved self-defeating. A more radical one is associated with the emergence of the econometric school. But sophisticated techniques for direct, efficient allocational choice-making are still only in an embryonic stage of experimentation. It is still impossible to be certain about the extent to which they can, in practice, assist the planner.

The key problem—as the writer time and again rightly emphasises—is a correct price structure. He gives the reader a clear account of the Soviet way of looking at the conflict between the equilibrium approach and growth. 'While it is true', he says, 'that, viewed dynamically, the scarcity of today may be a misleading guide, nonetheless the concept needs to be taken more seriously by Soviet economists. Whatever the basis of long-term investment planning may be, many of the existing scarcities tend to be durable, and to some extent forecastable precisely because the long-term investment is known' (p. 283). In any case a price divorced from the reality of which scarcities are a part, cannot lead to a realistic and rational decision. Yet a scarcity price comes up against a thought barrier in Soviet economics, wedded as it is to a prime-cost theory of value and concept of price.

There are conceivably, however, changes which could add to the flexibility and rationality of the Soviet system without affecting it too deeply. Nove discusses them in various contexts: what is needed in the first place is getting rid of what he terms the 'illogicalities' of prices and reforming the 'success indicators' in a way which would eliminate their push and pull towards a wrong kind of success. Debates on these subjects have gone on for years, and Mr Nove's account shows how difficult it is for the Soviet system to move towards any change—even of a kind which leaves its essentials and theoretical basis intact. Resistance to conscious change is by no means a Soviet monopoly, but it is of signal relevance for a system which by its very nature has to rely for its re-adjustments on conscious reform rather than on automatic forces.

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IN BRIEF

Michael T. Florinsky (ed.), **Encyclopedia of Russia and the Soviet Union.** McGraw-Hill, New York/London. 1962. 624 pp. £9 3s.

This ambitious and welcome effort to collect in one, admittedly huge, volume basic information about Russia and the Soviet Union follows not long after Mr Utechin's Everyman volume. The present book is more than twice as detailed and the general entries more substantial; it has six Ivanovs (not to count Ivanov-Razumnik) where Utechin has only two, one of them a baritone. (But then the McGraw-Hill encyclopedia only has the stage designer Williams, not the agrobiologist who is in Utechin's book.) Many distinguished names are among the contributors to this volume which is a guarantee of reliability but also made co-ordination and selection more difficult. Why, for instance, should Marius Petipa (1822–1910), the French-born dancer and choreographer, be given as much space as Rachmaninov or Khachaturyan, or, for that matter, the entire city of Leningrad? Why should Makhaysky (with 43 lines) have an entry longer than the city of Kiev, let alone many other eminent thinkers or writers? Nothing, admittedly, is easier than picking holes in an encyclopedia; the present work is surprisingly detailed, detached, competent, and up to date: Gagarin and Titov are here, though not yet Evtushenko. It is to be regretted that the high price may prevent this book from becoming generally accessible.

Enzo Collotti (ed.), **Die Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands.** Istituto Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, Milano. 1961. 217 pp.

An exhaustive bibliography, the most detailed available on the history of the German Communist Party, partly based on documents that are by now virtually inaccessible. The German text is somewhat deficient but still intelligible, and the bias of the author is sometimes too obvious; he apparently prefers contemporary East German publications to the writings of the 'deviationists' of the twenties and thirties. Within these limitations this is a very useful book.

Gillian King (ed.), **Documents on International Affairs.** Royal Institute of International Affairs: Oxford University Press. London, 1962. 605 pp. 84s.

The yearly volume of Chatham House documents; the first major section deals with West-East exchanges (the preparation of the summit conference, the Rapacki Plan, the Berlin crisis and Korea); there are several other sections of interest to the student of Soviet and East European affairs such as 'The Communist Powers and Allies' which includes documents on inter-bloc relations.

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Z. A. B. Zeman, **The Break-up of the Habsburg Empire, 1914–1918.** Oxford University Press. 1961. 274 pp. 30s.

An important contribution to the history of Eastern Europe after 1914, describing in detail the emergence of Slavic successor states of the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The author deals mainly with the activities of the Czech nationalists during the first world war; the struggle for national autonomy in Galicia, Slovenia and other Slavonic parts of the Habsburg empire are dealt with more briefly.

Oskar Anweiler, Klaus Meyer, **Die Sowjetische Bildungspolitik seit 1917.** Quelle & Meyer, Heidelberg. 1961. 424 pp. DM.26.

The fullest available collection of documents in a language other than Russian on the development of Soviet educational policy from 1917 to the new CPSU programme in 1961, the relevant parts of which are included in this book. This work includes a short and competent survey by the authors and 126 documents on elementary and higher education, the teaching of history, boarding schools, and many other topics.

Hans Speier, **Divided Berlin.** Praeger, New York. 1961. 201 pp. $4.95.

An analysis of Soviet strategy on Berlin from the late forties to 1 September 1961 by the chairman of the Research Council of the RAND Corporation.

L. Froese, R. Haas, O. Anweiler, **Bildungswettlauf Zwischen West und Ost.** Herder, Freiburg. 1961. 126 pp.

Essays in comparative education with particular reference to the competition between the Soviet Union and the United States.

Charles F. Delzell, **Mussolini's Enemies.** Princeton University Press/ Oxford University Press. 1961. 620 pp.

A massive history of the Italian Anti-Fascist Resistance from the early twenties to the final overthrow of Mussolini in 1945, including the most detailed survey available in English of Italian communism and socialism in this period. This is likely to become the standard work on the subject.

Arthur R. Mendel, **Dilemmas of Progress in Tsarist Russia.** Harvard University Press/Oxford University Press. 1961. 310 pp. 56s.

A competent study of 'Legal Marxism' and 'Legal Populism' around the turn of the century and of such contemporary thinkers as Berdyaev, Bulgakov, Mikhailovski, and Struve.

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Borys Lewyitzkyi, **Vom Roten Terror zur Sozialistischen Gesetzlichkeit.** Nymphenburger Verlag, Munich. 1961. 303 pp.

An historical account of the Soviet political police, the second and more interesting part of this book deals with the developments after Stalin's death and Beria's execution.

Alexander Werth, **The Khrushchev Phase.** Robert Hale, London. 1961. 284 pp. 25s.

A report on a short visit to Moscow by a well-known correspondent with a good all-round knowledge of Soviet literature and the arts, and with an unfortunate passion to pontificate on Soviet politics, on which his expertise is less convincing.

Vintage Russian Library.

Edited by Professors Black, Burns, Mosely, and Simmons, this series contains some welcome reissues and a few new publications in paper covers, among them Louis Fischer's *The Soviets in World Affairs,* Guerney's *Anthology of Russian Literature,* Philip Mosely's *The Kremlin and World Politics,* and Professor Simmons' two-volume study of Tolstoy.

David Footman (ed.), St. Antony's Papers Number 12: **Soviet Affairs: Number Three.** Chatto & Windus, London. 1962. 141 pp. 18s.

This collection of essays includes contributions on Alexander Keskuela (by Michael Futtrell) who made contact with the Russian emigration in Switzerland on behalf of the German government during the first world war, and on the assassination of Count Mirbach in Moscow in 1918.

M. Philips Price, **Russia Forty Years On.** Allen & Unwin. 1961. 127 pp. 18s.

Mr Philips Price, one of the few Westerners who were witnesses of the October revolution, reports on his findings as a tourist in Eastern Europe forty-two years later.

James Bunyan and H. H. Fisher, **The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1918.** Documents and Materials. Stanford University Press/Oxford University Press. 1961. 735 pp. 80s.

A reprint, with a few errata corrected, of a well known standard source book which has been out of print for many years. Some of the Russian originals are by now accessible only in a very few places, while Soviet selections of documents continue to be arbitrary and so much subject to political considerations as to make them devoid of value in any but the expert's hands. This book, which contains excerpts from the most important proclamations, speeches, etc. of the revolutionary period, is of particular relevance in the context of the current number of SURVEY.

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